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Prehistoric Humanised
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BODIES *of* CLAY

PREHISTORIC HUMANISED POTTERY

Edited by Heiner Schwarzberg & Valeska Becker



Bodies of Clay

On Prehistoric Humanised Pottery

*Proceedings of the Session at the 19th EAA Annual
Meeting at Pilsen, 5th September 2013*

edited by

Heiner Schwarzberg and Valeska Becker

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Front cover: Hollow anthropomorphic statue in pouring gesture from Immenhausen, Germany, Linear Pottery culture, c. 5000 BC (Hessian State Museum: photo by Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel, Sammlung für Vor- und Frühgeschichte); two anthropomorphic vessels from Sultana-Malu Rosu tell settlement, Romania, Gumelnița culture, c. 4500–3900 BC (National History Museum of Romania: photo by V. Opreș).

Back cover: Seated anthropomorphic vessel from Erfurt-Rankestrasse, Thuringia, Germany, Linear Pottery culture, c. 5000 BC (Thuringian State Archaeological Museum Weimar: photo by B. Stefan, TLDA Weimar).



István Zalai-Gaál (1951–2017)

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Preface

At least since the very beginnings of the usage of containers made of burned clay, vessels have been associated with the general shape and the parts of the human body. And even in today's terminology they are divided into elements like *neck*, *shoulder* and *body*, which is true for almost any language.

This understanding culminated in the production of human-shaped pottery which might be understood as a part of the spectrum of figural art in prehistoric communities. Starting with the European Neolithic and moving on through the Bronze and Iron Ages, this book aims to focus on diachronic archaeological patterns and contexts as well as on the theoretical background of this particular type of container in order to shed some light on similarities and differences through the ages and to understand both possibilities and limits of interpretation.

The idea of studying anthropomorphic pottery in general and the return of human beings into a body made of clay originated in our own works on anthropomorphic features of Neolithic communities between the Near East and Europe. From the beginnings of systematic prehistoric research, humanised containers aroused great interest. Numerous scholars all over Europe and beyond are engaged in questions concerning the analysis of human features and characteristics on vessels, their occurrence, function and their disposal. However, surprisingly there were almost no diachronic and comprehensive studies about this phenomenon.

Therefore, a session was held at the 19th Annual Meeting of the EAA in Pilsen, Czech Republic, in September 2013. The papers presented were of great academic value, and the discussion of the interpretation of these finds before, during and after the meeting revealed the great hermeneutic potential of this particular find category. By publishing the papers and discussions, supplemented with contributions of further scholars, we hope to spark a new debate about human-shaped pottery.

We are very thankful to all the colleagues who accompanied and supported the conference and the subsequent making of this book. We are grateful to Anneli O'Neill of Munich University who carried out linguistic corrections. We also wish to thank Julie Gardiner and Mette Bundgaard of Oxbow Books and Hannah McAdams of Casemate

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This book is dedicated to the memory of our friend and colleague István Zalai-Gaál, a renowned and highly-regarded specialist for the Neolithic and Chalcolithic of South-East and Central Europe, who also made a valuable contribution to the knowledge and understanding of Lengyel Culture anthropomorphic pottery.

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Chapter 1

Water into wine? Carrying vessels in the European Neolithic and Chalcolithic

Heiner Schwarzberg

The appearance of vessels, mainly made of fired clay, is one of the most salient characteristics of the European Neolithic. It belongs to the elements which – along other artefacts or cultural and economic elements, *e.g.* clay figurines, bracelets, pintaderas, agriculture, rural living, burial customs – have been introduced partly successively and asynchronous by migrating farmers of the Near East and Anatolia in the 7th and 6th millennia BC (see *e.g.* Çilingiroğlu 2005). Whilst there existed a well-defined pre-pottery Neolithic phase in the Near East up to West Anatolia, southeast Europe lacks equivalent traces and we strongly have to assume an entirely pottery using Early Neolithic already in the late 7th millennium BC.

Depictions of the human body made of clay already appeared in the European Upper Paleolithic and subsequently they became extremely common within the spectrum of the material culture of the Neolithic societies between the Near East and central Europe up to the 5th millennium BC (Hansen 2007). A special variant of anthropomorphic figurines, either fragmented or complete pottery vessels of human shape or with human attributes, have been found at numerous Neolithic and Chalcolithic sites. Unlike the calculated number of more than 30.000 solid figurines in southeast Europe, there are roughly 2,000 hollow, fillable and emptiable anthropomorphic statues (Hansen 2007: 2; Schwarzberg 2011: 15). Ornamental and structural parallels, *e.g.* a zonal layout of distinctive ornaments, clear differentiation between front and back sides, depictions and shapes of body parts and a face, prove that they have been an integral part of the Neolithic figural canon. Sometimes, both solid and hollow statues are adorned with the same miniature jewelry (Schwarzberg 2011: 38, 55, 175–81).

Some of the symbols depicted on the bodies seem to have underlain a complex and superregional understandable code system, most probably used in a cultic-social context (Schwarzberg 2017). Pottery vessels representing human bodies can be divided into three different basic types in different levels of abstraction and reduction: figural vessels (comparatively detailed depictions of the human body), face vessels (mostly just depictions of faces on the outer surface, no depictions of other body parts), face lids (attached to “ordinary” vessels with a cylindrical neck to attain a human shape) (Schwarzberg 2011: 15, 23–79, 81–166).

Already in its initial phase, figural vessels appear among solid statues in Neolithic Europe. Considering the big variety of shapes, sizes, wares, contexts as well as the long duration of use etc., it is very likely that the *sujet* of a human-shaped container was applied to different functions within the early farming communities. Among all these solid and hollow statues, depictions of human figures carrying vessels attract special attention. So, what or who is carrying vessels and for what purpose? Let’s have a look at the different variations of statues carrying containers.

Solid statues with painted or attached solid vessels

Solid statues with painted or attached solid vessels are – among tens of thousands of solid statues from Neolithic and Chalcolithic sites – extremely rare. Such an example has been discovered as a surface find in the Vinča-Culture settlement of Liubcova-Ornița in Romania, at the western entrance to the Iron Gate (Fig. 1.1). It is a standing figure with a face mask in one and a vessel in its other hand (Schier 2005: fig. 61; 2010: 80). A shield-shaped area at the vessels neck is not of random character but makes the distinct depiction of a face vessel, obviously dating to the phase Vinča D, very likely. The piece gains particular importance from the fact that it carries along a vessel combined with a face mask. Considering this, distinct as well as rather vague features of a symbolic ‘masking’ can be observed on numerous solid and hollow statues (Schwarzberg 2010a; Schier 2010: 77–81). It is possible that the dressing (see also Schwarzberg 2006a: 107) and masking of bodies of clay was a widespread though nowadays hardly detectable ritual action.

Solid statues with attached hollow vessels

Another particular type of statues carrying vessels is characterised by hollow vessels attached to a solid anthropomorphic body. From Novi

Bečej in the Vojvodina, presumably from the site of Bordoš, an extraordinary statue is known which probably belonged to the Tisza Culture (Grbić 1954: 7, figs 1–4; Hansen 2007: 192; Schwarzberg 2011: 68). The highly realistic figurine of 20 cm height shows the *sujet* of a sitting figure on a bench (Fig 1.1.2), common in the Vinča Culture and Tisza Culture as well as in some late Linear Pottery Culture (henceforth *LBK*) contexts.

A wide bowl is resting in the lap. Another but standing statue of just 9 cm height with a wide, shallow bowl in its hands, similar to the one from Novi Bečej, comes from a LBK context at Nové Vozokany in SW Slovakia (Bátora 1983: fig. 4).

Despite the fragmented condition (the head and torso of the upper body are preserved), a small, most probably sitting figurine from Gaukönigshofen near Würzburg in Lower Franconia with traces of an attached object on the chest shows similar features, so its reconstruction can be accepted (Fig. 1.2.1) (Wamser 1980: figs 1–2.8; Schwarzberg 2011: 51). It comes from a destroyed settlement pit of early LBK date and therefore predates the above-mentioned statue from the Vojvodina. Originating from the relatively characteristic posture of the Gaukönigshofen figurine, S. Hansen (2007: 297) assigns further pieces of different phases of the LBK, *e.g.* from Cífer-Pác in Slovakia (Kolník 1978: 337–39), Przybanowo in Kujavia (Czerniak 1994: 51, fig. 14.13), Rosheim in the Alsace (Thévenin 1971: fig. 2) and Sittard in the Netherlands province of Limburg (Modderman 1958/59: 99–100, fig. 71). Here, further statuary art from Butzbach-Griedel in Hesse and Vedrovice in South Moravia should be added (Modderman 1958/59: 99–100, fig. 71; Meier-Arendt 1966: 49, tab. 102.2).



Figure 1.1: 1. Solid statue with attached solid vessel from Liubcova-Ornița (Schier 2005); 2. Solid statue with attached hollow vessel from Novi Bečej-Bordoš (Grbić 1954).

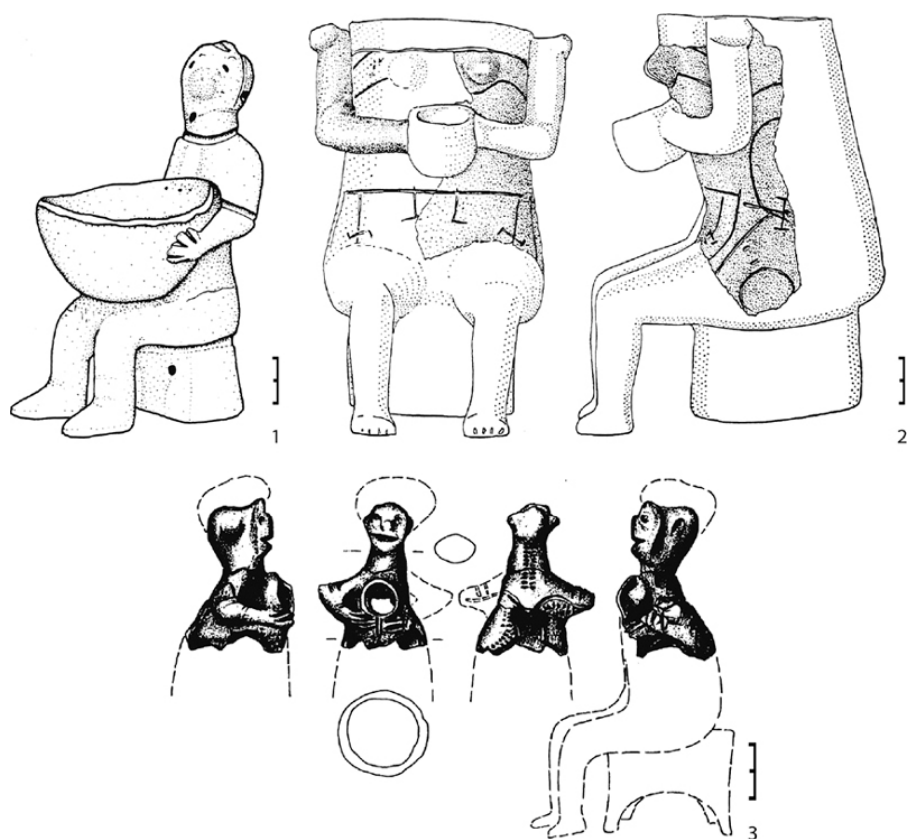


Figure 1.2: 1, 3. Solid statues with attached hollow vessels from Gaukönigshofen (Wamser 1980) and Immenhausen (Kneipp 2001); 2. Hollow statue with attached hollow vessel from Erfurt (Engelhardt 1992).

Sometimes, the actual bodies of the statues are lost but the previously attached miniature vessels show distinct traces of their original mounting, e.g. on a deep miniature bowl of 5 cm height with two broken-off hands that comes from Mouchnice in Moravia (Neustupný 1930–35: 102, fig. 3). Similar pieces are known from Mužla-Čenkov in SW Slovakia (Fig. 1.3.7) (Kuzma 1990: 431, 436, fig. 8.9), Hohenaltheim at the southern fringes of the Nördlinger Ries (Fig. 1.3.6) (Hohenaltheim 1995: 36, fig. 29), Heilbronn-Neckargartach (Fig. 1.3.2) (Schmidgen-Hager 1993: 186, 263, fig. 63.1), Merseburg-Steckmersberg in central Germany (Kaufmann 1976: 78–79, fig. 11) and Riedstadt-Goddelau in the Rhine Rift Valley (Fig. 1.3.4) (Becker 2011: 420, tab. 6.5).

A figurine of the late LBK from Immenhausen in Hesse (Kneipp 2001: 31, fig. 13) shows a different gesture: in contrast with the above mentioned “static” examples this piece consists of the head and upper body of a human figure, the arms clasping a vessel’s spout in an active

pouring movement (Fig. 1.2.3).

Hollow statues with painted and attached hollow vessels

So far, the earliest preserved (hollow) statue with a depicted vessel is known from the Early Chalcolithic level I of Hacilar in southwest Anatolia, from the first half of the 6th millennium BC (Fig. 1.4) (Mellaart 1970: tabs 176, 249.1; Schwarzberg 2011: 28). The well-proportioned figural vessel of sitting posture shows female sexual features (breasts) and holds a painted globular vessel in front of the chest. Wavy lines have been discussed already by J. Mellaart to indicate a liquid content inside the vessel. Another roundish, flask like statue keeps a painted wide and shallow bowl (Mellaart 1970: fig. 248; Schwarzberg 2011: 29). A widely unknown comparable, even more detailed vessel from the same site shows a rectangular field of ornamentation, filled with wavy lines, which allows the interpretation as a stylised painted vessel, comparable to the above-mentioned piece (Aitken *et al.* 1971: 111, tab. 2.8; Schwarzberg 2011: 28–29). There is a strong probability that there have been several comparable vessels. Hacilar in particular is a site where the wide range from clear images to indistinct ornamental elements which might have had anthropomorphic connotations is highly evident (Schwarzberg 2011: 141–42).

Comparable depictions are not yet known from West Anatolia or southeast Europe in the immediately following centuries. Surprisingly, this phenomenon reappears in central Europe in a LBK context (Schwarzberg 2011: 49–53). In 1956, the torso of a hollow anthropomorphic statue was discovered during construction work in Erfurt in Thuringia (Fig. 1.2.2) (Behm-Blancke 1964: figs 1–2; Schwarzberg 2011: 52). By formal aspects it is comparable with the sitting figurines of the Tisza Culture but imprints on hand and chest indicate the presence of an attached miniature (globular) vessel kept in front of the chest, similar to the aforementioned solid figurines from Gaukönigshofen or Bordos. From other comparable hollow LBK statues, *e.g.* Weisweiler 17 (Krahn 2006: 365–66, tabs 6–7), no attached vessels are known yet.

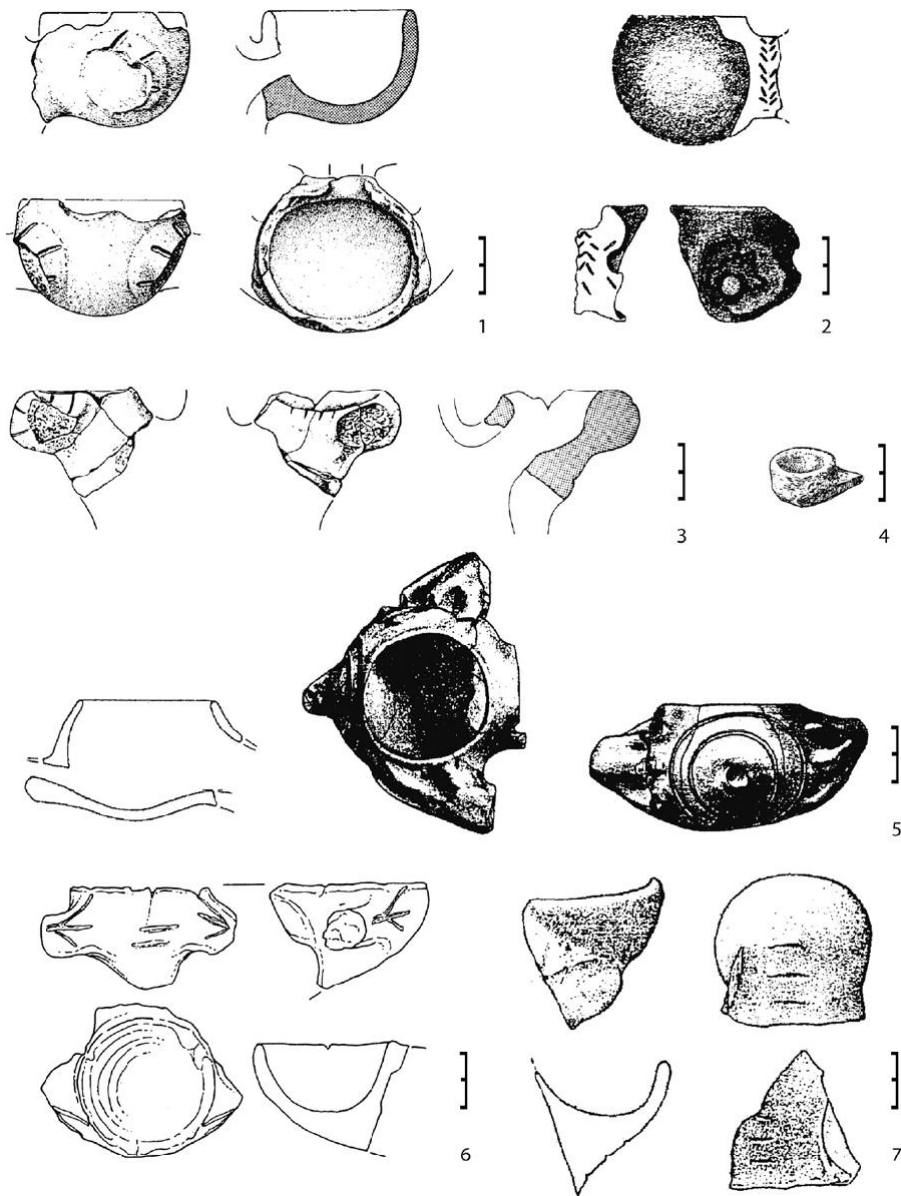


Figure 1.3: Fragments of solid and hollow statues with attached hollow vessels. 1. Untereisenheim (Wamser 1980); 2. Heilbronn-Neckargartach; 3. Zilgendorf; 4. Riestadt-Godelau; 5. Gerlingen; 6. Hohenaltheim; 7. Mužla-Čenkov (all Becker 2011).



Figure 1.4: Hollow statue with painted vessel from Hacilar (Mellaart 1970).

A settlement pit in Zilgendorf in Upper Franconia revealed the fragment of a hollow statue with a vessel in its hands (Fig. 1.3.3) (Schönweis 1976: 31–32, tab. 38). Similar small deep bowls with an aperture and two attached but now broken-off hands have been found in Untereisenheim (Fig. 1.3.1) (Engelhardt 1992: 368, fig. 2.2) and Mainstockheim in Lower Franconia (Wamser 1980: fig. 6) as well as from Gerlingen near Ludwigsburg in the Neckar basin (Fig. 1.3.5) (Neth 1999: 150–51, tab. 88.5).

Another possibly related statue was discovered during excavations in an early LBK settlement in Strögen in Lower Austria (Neugebauer-Maresch 1995: fig. 5.2; Lenneis and Lüning 2001: 208–12, fig. 65). On top of a head of c. 10 cm height, a shallow bowl seems to be attached.

Vessels carrying vessels

Most probably being developed from hollow statuettes and realistic anthropomorphic vessels and giving an excellent hint of the prehistoric notion of the human body as a container, another type of anthropomorphic figurine are more or less full-sized vessels carrying smaller vessels. Although they appear to be rather exceptional, it is

well likely that most of them have not been recognised in the mainly enormous material of central and southeast European Neolithic sites. This particular type of vessel may be illustrated by a rim fragment of a deep bowl from Mohelnice in North Moravia, discovered 1954 in a settlement pit (Fig. 1.5.3) (Tichý 1956: 6, fig. 7). From the vessel's wall, two arms arise, which embrace a smaller deep bowl, communicating by a small aperture. Its diameter of 6 cm is exact half of the main vessel's diameter. The presence of an attached head or face can be ruled out with high probability. A vertical lug indicates that the vessel may have been sealed.

From an excavation of the 1920s in Pavlice in South Moravia, a fragmented deep bowl of 5.5 cm height is known (Tichý 1958: 14, figs 12–13). Frequently it is reconstructed as a double vessel, but by reference to the published images, the reconstruction of a single bowl with attached arms – similar to the piece from Mohelnice – might be possible.

A remarkable amphora-shaped vessel of the Late Neolithic Szakálhát group is known from Parța in the Banat (Fig. 1.5.1) (Lazarovici *et al.* 2001: 280, fig. 257; Schwarzberg 2011: 44). Two raised arms arise from its shoulder, the hands with indicated fingers clasping the bowl-shaped vessel's mouth everting from the neck, forming a combined vessel. The head is decorated with an insinuated coiffure. Below the vessel's mouth a W- or M-shaped motif was applied which is known from various other anthropomorphic vessels, mainly from LBK context (Schwarzberg 2017: 126–28). Behind the “head”, a second straight neck was attached to fill in a presumable liquid content. By the excavator, Gh. Lazarovici, it was attributed to be a libation vessel.

Although the exact shape of a LBK Culture figurine from Borken-Arnsbach in northern Hesse is not clear, a raised arm indicates that it carried an object, presumably a vessel, on top of its head (Fig. 1.5.2) (Herrmann and Jockenhövel 1990: fig. 65.5).

A variation of vessels carrying vessels are so-called combined vessels (*Etagengefäße*), consisting of different vertically arranged pots forming an entire and to a greater or lesser extent stylised anthropomorphic body.

Most prominent are the vessels of the Svodín type, being a highly characteristic anthropomorphic vessel type of the Lengyel Culture known from more than a dozen sites between Lower Austria and mainly the western part of the Carpathian Basin (Ruttkey 2001; Zalai-Gaál 2008; Schwarzberg 2011: 70–72). As an example from the eponymous site of Svodín (Fig. 1.5.4) (Neustupný 1930–35; Lička and Bareš 1979: fig. 9.1; Zalai-Gaál 2000: figs 1–3) shows, they are mainly

constructed of a larger vessel forming a body and a smaller vessel as a head. Two raised arms terminate in hands, vessels *en miniature* or as stubs. Sometimes the vessels are painted. Another related piece from Buštěhrad in the northwestern periphery in Bohemia has additional attached legs (Lička and Bareš 1979: 135–36, figs 1.20, 1.22).

Another type of combined anthropomorphic vessel, known from a Lengyel settlement at Sé in Transdanubia (Fig. 1.5.6) (Kalicz 1998: 72–73, fig. 38), shows no attached limbs but a face on the cylindrical neck. It is more than 30 cm high, has a more vertical character and consists of a globular lower vessel, a cylindrical body with breasts and a superimposed s-profiled beaker with an applied face. A good comparison of similar large dimensions is known from Aşağı Pinar in Turkish Thrace (Schwarzberg 2006: 2, tab. 1.5), consisting of two rounded vessels with the typical inclined profile of the local Toptepe facies. Perhaps, another fragmented anthropomorphic vessel from Kamnik near Korçë in southeast Albania (Korkuti 1990: tab. LXII.a) is typologically related to it.

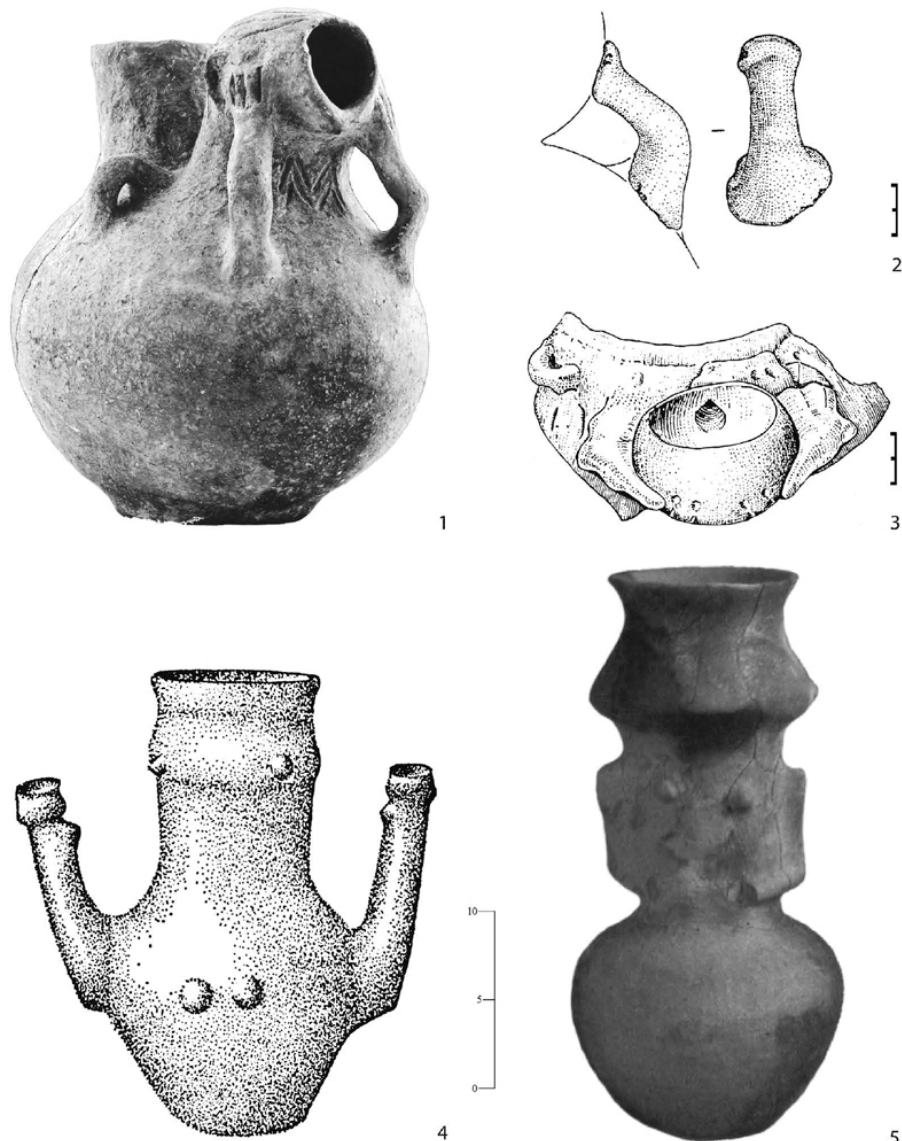


Figure 1.5: Vessels, carrying vessels and combined vessels. 1. Parța (Neolithic Art 2008); 2. Borken-Arnhausen (Herrmann/Jockenhövel 1990); 3. Mohelnice (Tichý 1956); 4. Svodín (Lička/Bareš 1979); 5. Sé (Kalicz 1998).

A vivid afterlife

In the course of the decline of the LBK and its immediate successive cultures in central and parts of southeast Europe (Lengyel Culture, Stroked Pottery Culture etc.), the tradition of figural art dwindled, although it did not disappear completely (Schwarzberg 2016: 45). Even though the presence of statues carrying vessels can not be proven in the aforementioned area later than the early 5th millennium

BC, they had – most probably mediated via the Carpathian Basin into the vast area north of the Danube River, far beyond the strict principles of the iconography of the developed Vinča Culture – a surprising and vivid afterlife at the Balkan Peninsula, back in the southeast.

Early examples of statues carrying a vessel reveal from Hotărani-La Turn in Oltenia (Figs 1.6.1–2) (Nica 2001: fig. 4). One of them is c. 5 cm high with a wide bowl on top of its head and dates from the local phase Vadastra IV and therefore might provide a chronological bridge to the LBK.

From Luka Vrubleveckaja in Podolia another remarkably early anthropomorphic figurine carrying a vessel is known (Fig. 1.6.3) (László 1970: figs 5.6, 5.10; Nițu 1971: fig. 12.1). It comes from a Precucuteni III/Tripolye A context. Although the upper structure and the conically reconstructed body are lost, the right shoulder and arm are preserved and give proof of its original appearance with a vessel kept on the head. It resembles the early piece from Hotărani by design.

Another statue was found at the eponymous site of Iclod on the Someș River, being contemporaneous with Vinča C (Fig. 1.6.5) (Lazarovici *et al.* 2001: fig. 2.10). The relatively realistic figurine with a long nose and punctured eyes and mouth keeps a bowl-like vessel in front of its chest or on the lap. The design clearly shows that it rather orientated towards the figural *canon* of the Carpathian Basin than towards the classic stylised statues of the Vinča C period.

From a Cucuteni A3 settlement near Trușești, east of the Carpathian Mountains, another anthropomorphic statue with a superimposed vessel was published (Fig. 1.6.4) (Nițu 1971: fig. 13.2; Boghian 1997: fig. 2). The arms are extended sideways. In spite of the realistic body, the design of the face shows connections to finds from the Dunavska Ravnina and the Câmpia Română.

From the eponymous site of Gumelnița in Muntenia, at least two realistic statues carrying a vessel are known (Figs 1.7.1–2). One of them, dating to the phase Gumelnița B, is of conical shape with arms reaching upwards (Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967: 21–22, tab. 5). The large fragment still measures 22.5 cm. The body shows depictions of clothing. The figure carries a typical pot with a short cylindrical neck on its head. Another published fragment is a head of 9 cm of a similar figurine (Micu and Micu 1995/96: tab. 2.2). Both examples differ in the design of the face and the presence of an opposing face on the latter piece.

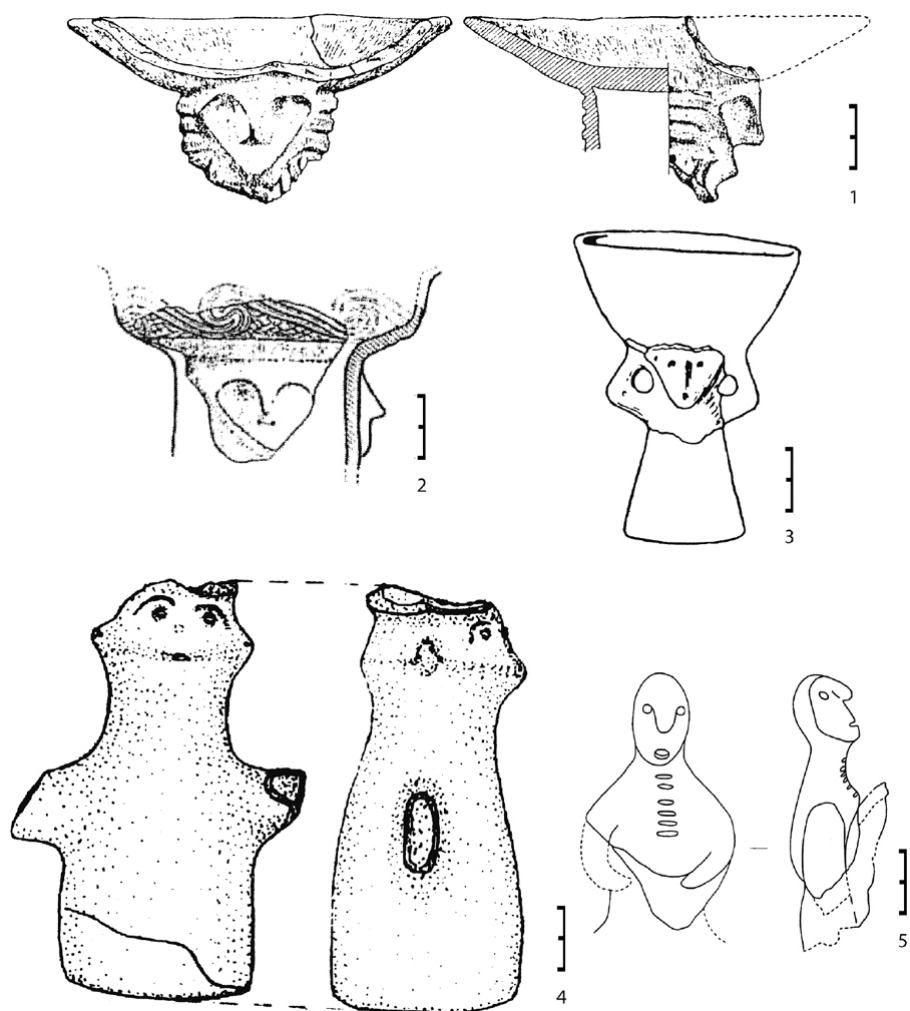


Figure 1.6: Neolithic and chalcolithic statues with attached vessels from southeast Europe. 1–2. Hotarani-La Turn (Hansen 2007; Nica 2001); 3. Luka Vrubleveckaja (László 1970); 4. Truşeşti (Boghian 1997); 5. Iclod (Lazarovici 2000).

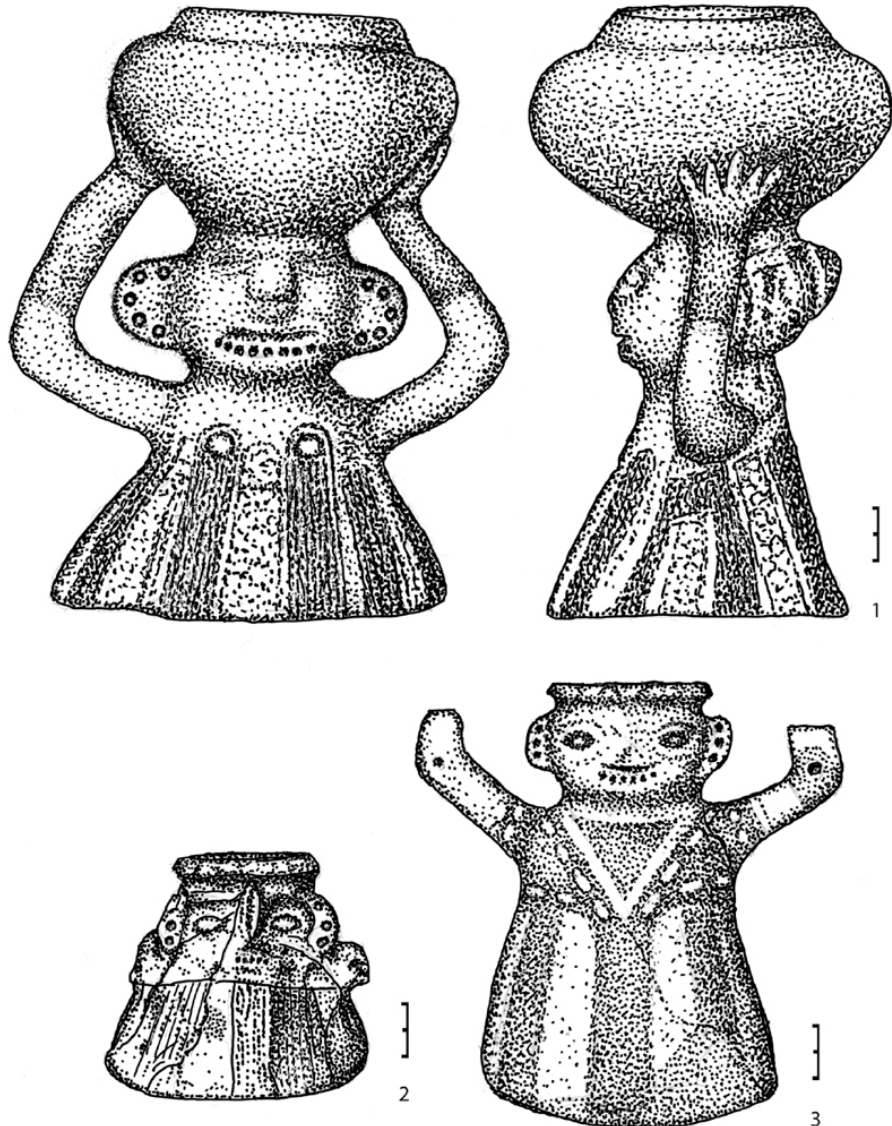


Figure 1.7: Chalcolithic statues with attached vessels from southeast Europe. 1–2. Gumelnița; 3. Glina (all J. Hofmaier after Micu/Micu 1995/96).

From the settlement of Vidra on the Danube Plain, another two similar statues of the same chronological horizon were published. One of them is 15 cm high and of conical shape with a superimposed bowl (Micu and Micu 1995/96: tab. 3.1; Hansen 2007: 247). Both arms are broken off and the body shows indications of clothing. The second piece, coming from a Gumelnița B1 context, is the head of an anthropomorphic statue with a bowl on its head (Nițu 1969: [fig. 2.3](#)).

A similar figurine with upwards reaching arms has been discovered in Glina near Bucarest ([Fig. 1.7.3](#)) (Micu and Micu 1995/96: tab. 3.2;

Hansen 2007: 247). The dress is shown in detail and a downward pointing triangle might have represented a pectoral-like adornment.

A salient and prominent combined vessel of 15.2 cm height, shaped as an anthropomorphic figure carrying a pot, comes from the chalcolithic settlement of Hotnica in North Bulgaria (Fig. 1.8.1) (Gumelnița A2/Karanovo VI; Todorova 1978: tab. 33; Thraker 2004: 74 cat. no. 69). It consists of a typical narrow mouthed pot with a slightly inclining shoulder and a lower body with a roughened surface. The neck proceeds into a wide oval face with oval eyes and a beak-like nose. On top of the head rests – carried by two arms – an identical pot with a coarse lower part.

Further examples from Gumelnița contexts reveal from Ruse “Sugar Mill” at the Bulgarian south bank of the Danube River (an amphora with curved shoulder and stylised face on the neck, perhaps with a superimposed similar vessel; Georgiev and Angelov 1952: fig. 36), Căscioarele (Fig. 1.8.2) (head fragment; Nițu 1971: fig. 12.3), Luncavița, downstream at the Danube’s estuary near Galați (head and arm fragment of a strongly stylised figurine with attached vessel on top of the head; Micu and Micu 1995/96: tab. 1) (Fig. 1.8.3) and in two cases from Pietrele (mouthless head: Nițu 1969: fig. 1.4; small torso with raised arms keeping a funnel-like bowl: Hansen 2007: 247 fig. 153). Most of these anthropomorphic statues show piercings in the ears and around the mouth, originally filled with bone or metal earrings or plates.

A fragment of an arm of a large figurine of c. 50 cm height, keeping an open vessel which might show similarities to the above-mentioned statues of the early Lengyel Culture, has been discovered as a surface find at Grădiștea Ulmilor in Oltenia (Culica 1980: fig. 2.).

Beside the realistic type another, more stylised type is known from Chalcolithic sites at the Balkan Peninsula. From a Cucuteni A2 settlement context of Dumești-Hoisești “Lînga Pod” an extraordinary, highly reduced painted statue is published (Fig. 1.8.4) (Boghian 1997: fig. 1). It consists of an anthropomorphic head on a hollow foot with a superimposed bowl. Another head from a Cucuteni A2 context, which might have had a vessel on top, was discovered at Mărgineni “Cetățuia” at the river Siret (Mareș and Ursu 1997/98: cat. no. 29).

By analogy with the highly-abstracted statues carrying vessels of the Cucuteni-Tripolye-complex, a particular type of vessel – so called “Hora stands”, hollow pedestals with arm-like applications or apertures shaping the outline of a body – can possibly be related to it (Monah 1997: 161–66; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 168–69). Typical examples are the 37 cm high pedestal from Bodești-Frumușica (Fig.

1.9.1) (Cucuteni A2; Cucuteni 1997: 190 no. 51 with fig., fig. 53; Monah 1997: fig. 234.3) from Tîrgu Bereşti (Fig. 1.9.2) (Monah 1997: fig. 233.4) or a slightly younger pedestal from Drăguşeni with a bowl on top of a cylindrical body (Cucuteni 1997: 191 no. 53–54 with fig.; Monah 1997: figs 234.1–2). Again, it is likely that more strongly abstracted or heavily fragmented statues remain mainly unidentified within other pottery finds.

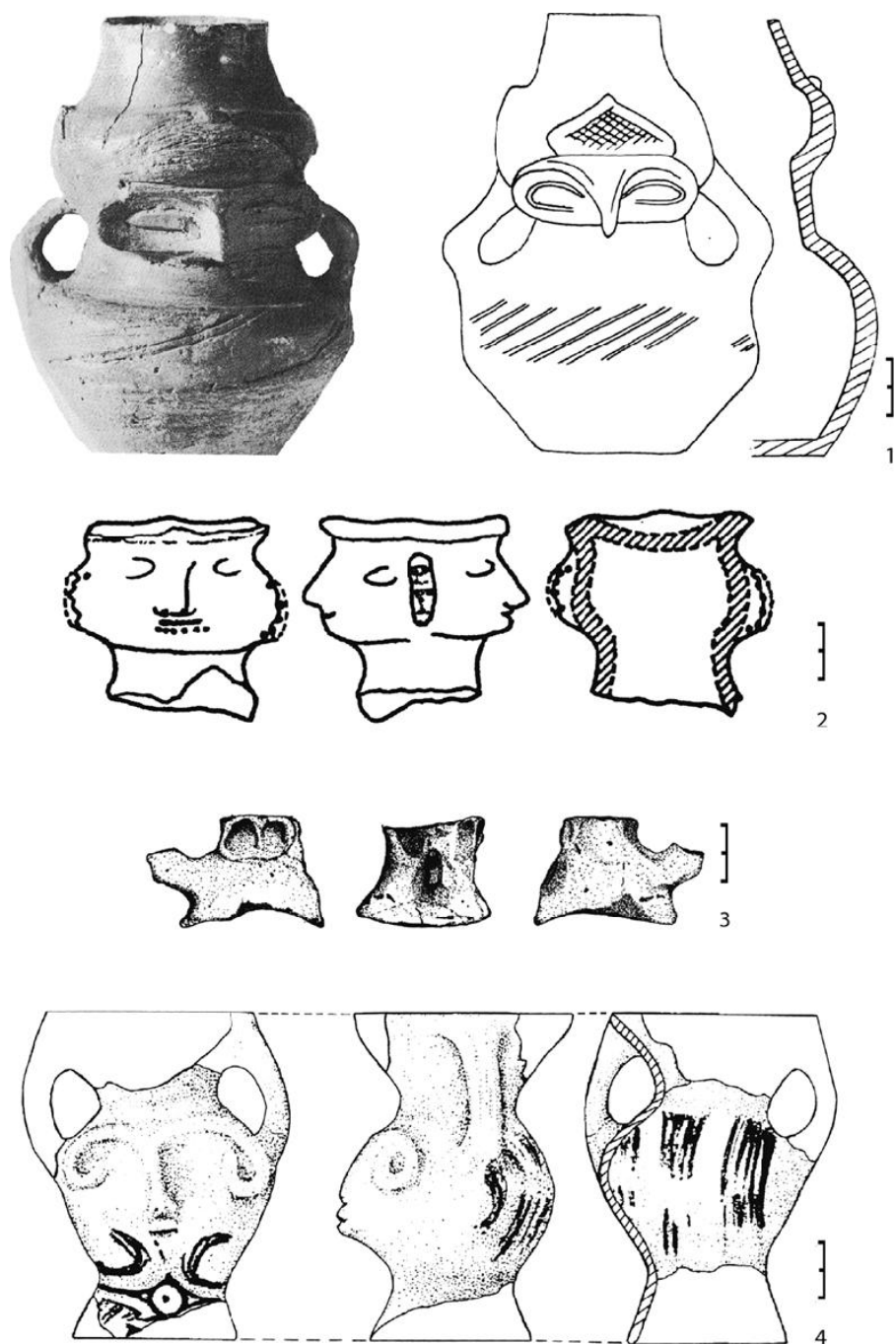


Figure 1.8: Chalcolithic statues with attached vessels from southeast Europe. 1. Hotnica (Tsoneva 1971; Nițu 1971); 2. Căscioarele (Nițu 1971); 3. Luncavița (Micu/Micu 1995/96); 4. Dumești-Hoișești (Boghian 1997).

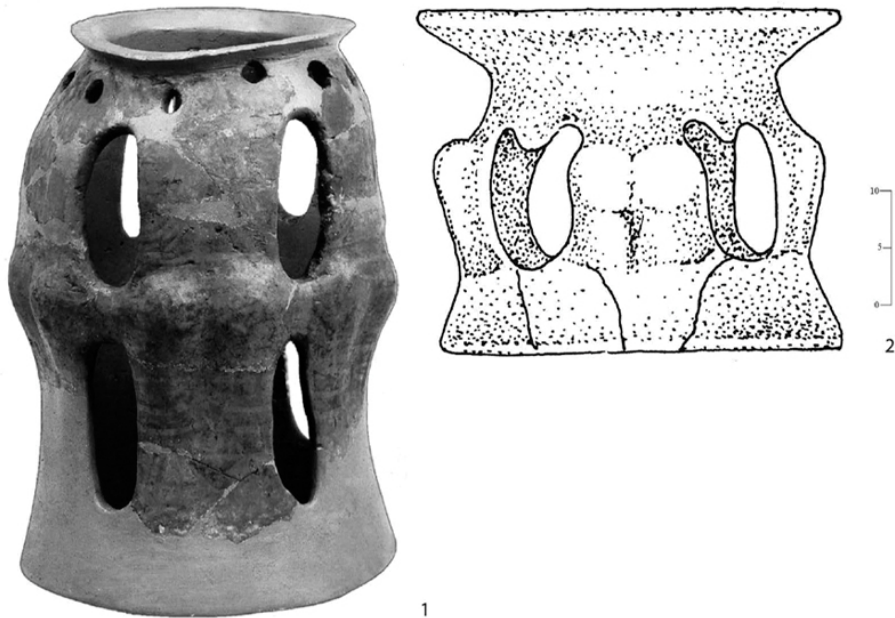


Figure 1.9: Pedestals of Hora type. 1. Bodești-Frumușica (Cucuteni 1997); 2. Tîrgu Berești (Mantu 1993).

With the expiration of the tradition of the neolithic and chalcolithic figural art in southeast Europe, the making and use of anthropomorphic figurines carrying vessels peters out.

Vessel types, positions and gestures

As demonstrated above, solid and hollow statues which carry vessels are a rather rare but nevertheless consistently occurring phenomenon of the European Neolithic and Chalcolithic figural set. Although the figurines are often fragmented, it is possible to determine whether the vessels kept by the anthropomorphic statues were of special types or have been provided with exceptional features. This is especially the case for the vessels of the LBK which are quite well preserved due to their simple and sturdy shapes.

In general, the vessels in use show quite common types and shapes, even though *en miniature*. Starting with the early examples from Hacilar, simple narrow-mouthed (Fig. 1.4) deep or wide-mouthed shallow bowls with straight walls (Schwarzberg 2011: tab. 3) – well known from contemporary contexts – were depicted. Wavy lines indicate either painted ornaments or represent (presumably liquid) contents.

To a greater or lesser extent, the stylised figurines of LBK contexts carry, as far it is identifiable, classical LBK vessel shapes, being

mainly deep bowls (“Kümpfe”) with straight (Figs 1.2.3, 1.3.1, 1.3.3–4, 1.5.1) or slightly inclining mouths (Figs 1.3.2, 1.3.5, 1.5.3) or shallow, wide-mouthed bowls (Figs 1.3.6–7).

Considering that statues of the LBK, a cultural phenomenon that extended up to today’s Ukraine, most probably stimulated the development of figurines with vessels of the 5th millennium BC in the southeast, it is hardly surprising that the earliest pieces resemble the simple types and shapes known from the LBK (Figs 1.1.2, 1.6.1, 1.6.5).

Only from some Gumelnița and Karanovo V/VI contexts and a few pieces of the Lengyel Culture Svodín type, more complex shapes with a distinct shoulder or neck sections are known (Figs 1.7.1, 1.8.1, 1.8.4) – nevertheless reflecting common contemporary types.

It is striking that hardly any particular anthropomorphic vessels, face vessels or other exceptional forms but “ordinary” everyday types were depicted. A hitherto single exception might be constituted by the enigmatic headless anthropomorphic statue with a face mask and a presumable face vessel from Liubcova-Ornița (Fig. 1.1.1).

Considering the published data, there are at least five different positions or gestures observable on anthropomorphic Neolithic and Chalcolithic statues which carry vessels.

1. Statues with vessels in front of the chest or in front of the belly (Figs 1.2.2, 1.4, 1.5.3, 1.6.5): These gestures could include carrying, receiving or presenting actions.
2. Statues with vessels on the lap (Figs 1.1.2, 1.2.1): Currently, this particular type seems to be limited to seated figurines of the LBK Culture and of the Tisza Culture. It would not be surprising if additional statues with this particular depiction would appear in early Lengyel contexts. The gesture could include e.g. a keeping or receiving action.
3. Statues pouring the content of a vessel (Fig. 1.2.3): By now, this type is limited to a single piece from Immenhausen, related to the LBK Culture.
4. Statues keeping vessels in the hands (Figs 1.3.1, 1.3.5–6, 1.5.4): This gesture includes keeping and carrying actions.
5. Statues holding vessels on the head (Figs 1.6.1–4, 1.7, 1.8.1, 1.8.3; probably Fig. 1.5.2): This gesture could include carrying, receiving and/or keeping gestures.

Mainly, it is not possible to determine detailed individual features on the statues; most of them appear very schematic (see also Becker 2011: 349–50). Although some of the examples show female sexual characteristics, it is by far not possible to identify all of them as

distinct “portraits” of women (about the complexity of the assessment of sexual characteristics on anthropomorphic figural art see Hansen 2007: 194–95).

Looking at the chronological patterns, it appears that the early pieces have vessels in front of the chest or of the belly. A single LBK piece shows a vessel in a surprisingly dynamic pouring action. Especially the younger pieces of southeast Europe depict anthropomorphic figures with vessels on the heads. Although there appear several variations, general similarities of the gestures are striking. At least the pieces of the same chronological horizon repeat the same activities in a manner that make the depiction of a random everyday action highly improbable but a ritual action definitely more likely.

Conclusion

Numerous Neolithic anthropomorphic statues with attached fill- and/or depletable vessels have been discovered in southeast and central European settlement contexts over the last decades. Only a very few examples show solid vessels or painted depictions. All of them have to be assessed in the light of anthropomorphic vessels, ambiguous depictions of human-shaped bodies as containers (Schwarzberg 2011: 188–91).

Except the eldest, somehow isolated-appearing, painted depictions from Hacilar, most of the early examples of statues with attached vessels reveal from LBK Culture contexts in central Europe with a focal point in the area of the Great Main Bight in Lower Franconia (Schwarzberg 2010: 143–45). In the course of the LBK Culture expansion, this *sujet* has been transmitted from west to east and southeast, reaching a last “climax” in the Late Chalcolithic application of statues carrying vessels in today’s Bulgaria and Romania. An important role was assigned to anthropomorphic combined vessels (*Etagengefäße*).

The depicted vessel types represent the common contemporaneous spectrum: early examples mostly with open shapes, younger types show more complex vessel types. Almost never there seem to have been depictions of face vessels (an exception is, of course, the hitherto singular Liubcova statue with a face vessel in one and a mask in the other hand). The position of the vessels in relation to the body is changing from the chest/lap (LBK Culture) up to the head (e.g. Gumelnița Culture). The sexual characteristics – if identifiable – are corresponding with the whole figural set and tend either to a female sphere or are indifferent. It seems that these aspects played a less

significant role.

So, what is discernable from this particular type of figural art? Of course, considering that we are far beyond written record and generally the archaeological contexts are not at all clear (Schwarzberg 2011: 167–75), the possible assumptions are limited. However, regarding the oftenly repeating, in fact highly conservative depictions, these statues seem to have been used for a certain action or, as P. Raczky and A. Anders (2003: 170) stated

such objects cannot be regarded as expressions of a “substance” tied to a single, static state. They rather mediate a longer chain of activity and *textus*, in which they may have been considered actual protagonists within given social context.

The vast geographical distribution of some of these depictions proves that these images have been understood in an extremely large territory over a long time. Although it is highly unlikely that these statues are random “snapshots” of the everyday life of farming communities is not clear if – highly tempting – different stages of a putative ritual action or varying activities of different character have been figured, perhaps as proxys or substitutes playing an active role in the receiving, keeping and pouring of certain, most probably liquid goods. Furthermore, the different types (hollow or solid bodies, different sizes, etc.) might indicate different functions.

An example of a recent ritual, based on observations of. G. Y. Kiselinov from the 1940s and recently discussed by G. Naumov, is highly suggestive and may be cited here:

The equation of a vessel with a woman was present in some other rites in Macedonia. In its southern part (the Resen and Prespa regions), young girls were practicing a rite called Ivanka or Ivanden, *i.e.* St. John’s Day ... On that day, adolescent girls were making a doll (“bride”) out of decorated ceramic vessels. During the preparations, the girls were placing water as well as objects inside the vessel; another vessel was placed on the previous one upside down to represent the head of the doll. These vessels were decorated with anthropomorphic details and during the procession, were carried by the girls on their heads. It is believed that this idol will bring prosperity and suitable husbands to the girls, whilst the water splashing around will bring health and children (Naumov 2008: 98–99).

But as fascinating and illustrating these details of the use of combined vessels in connection with a classic *rite de passage* are and as much they shed light on possible actions in exact the same geographical space as our objects of interest, they show the general catch to this ethnographical attempt: The observations are divided by 6,000–7,000 years, belong to a completely different cultural setting and therefore are just *one* of many explanations in the mirror of our own social background and therefore should be considered with regard but still extreme caution.

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Chapter 2

The anthropomorphism of human-like pots: Circular paths in the archaeological thought

Evangelia Voulgari

Introduction

Almost all archaeological approaches, despite the diversity and variety of their interpretative models, have a common ground when treating pots characterised as “anthropomorphic”:¹ they detach them from the ceramic assemblage, decorated or not (see e.g. Gimbutas 1989; Hodder 1990: 61–63; Tilley 1996: 273; Chapman 2000: 79–81; Pileidou 2006; Chapman and Gaydarska 2007: 117; Naumov 2008; Schwarzberg 2010). Pots with human characteristics are probed and interpreted as a special category of artefacts with special archaeological meaning. Based on a hierarchical classification system, undecorated, decorated and “anthropomorphic” pots usually constitute *a priori* distinct classes of objects that require different approaches. “Anthropomorphic” pots are something more than decorated, in the same way that decorated is something more than undecorated. The causes of this distinction could be sought in the modern figural bias, in our perception about representation, or in the importance that contemporary cultures attach to human representations (Maquet 1986: 74–75).

However, the above-mentioned can only partially explain why archaeological studies have detached “anthropomorphic” pots – a vessel correlated to just one human being – thinking that they are separated even from pots decorated with more than one human figure. Their distinction can be explained neither by their readability nor by our own emphasis on human images. It seems that there is a silent consensus that as long as people, regardless of when, where, and how, place the characteristics of a single human being on a pot’s surface,

they do not just decorate this pot; they humanise it. Because of this self-evident anthropomorphism, both the ceramic body and its decoration are examined as an indivisible whole. On the contrary, linear or geometrical patterns of “simple” decorated pots are usually studied isolated from the vessel’s surface. It is obvious that archaeologists distinguish human characteristics from “non-representational” motifs not because of their stylistic difference but because of their *a priori* conceived otherness. Scholars usually assume that the pot in its entirety, both universally and cross-culturally, refers to the human body as a whole through its structure and its functionality (cf. e.g. Welbourn 1984: 17–24; David *et al.* 1988: 365–89; Tilley 1996: 316–24; Rautman and Talalay 2000: 5; Hamilakis *et al.* 2002: 11; Nanoglou 2008b: 317). The vessel metaphor is widely acknowledged and supported by references to ethnographic and historical accounts (Gosselain 1999: 212–14; Forni 2007; Fowler 2008: 51–56; Crossland 2010: 396–401). Furthermore, based on the fact that even today we use human anatomy terms to describe vessel parts, such as body, mouth, neck, shoulder, foot etc., archaeologists assume that pots could have been conceptualised as human bodies in the past cultures as well. This assumption is deemed to require no evidence for its validation and support. Therefore, questions such as why someone needs to humanise something even more that is already “humanised”, or what exactly constitutes human and non-human characteristics and qualities, have never been posed. It seems that “anthropomorphic” vessels have been examined separately not because of their similarities to humans but due to the overestimation of this similarity through a vicious circle.

Based on contemporary western concepts about the relations between subjects and objects, people, animals, artefacts, etc. as well as the meaning associated with representation in general, or the representation of human beings in particular, archaeological approaches vary only in regard to the interpretation of the self-evident anthropomorphism of these artefacts. The pots with human characteristics are thought to constitute a universally discrete category and, therefore, are interpreted in isolation from their cultural correlations and context. They may indicate the presence of prehistoric goddesses (Gimbutas 1989), or verify the biological evolution and domination of human beings over nature (Mithen 1996). They may betoken the metaphorical relationships between people and their material culture where the pots are conceived as humans (Tilley 1996: 318), or, according to the most recent views, they could be seen as the fractal bodies of non-human persons, as

mediators in their own right, objects as persons whose major concern was the regulation of flows of substances (Fowler 2004: 115, 128; 2008: 51–52).

However, in all the above approaches the social need that an “anthropomorphic” pot carried out is considered to be common to all cultures. What researchers have been attempting to interpret are the causes of the self-evident humanisation of these pots and not their historical and social significance in their specific contexts. Even the last two approaches that address the relationships between people, things, objects and animals through another prism are still trapped inside what they attempt to overcome. The human being is displayed again as a universal and unquestioned value. Its depiction is examined as temporally constant and, consequently, cross-cultural recognisable. The relationships between people, things, objects and animals may vary culturally, but from the Neolithic Balkans up to the Ga’anda of present-day Nigeria the pots with human characteristics may have an analogous interpretation as far as their materiality is concerned (Fowler 2008: 51–52).

Even if we accept this self-evident anthropomorphism, we cannot overlook the fact that anthropomorphism is a quite complex phenomenon. It describes the tendency to imbue the real or imagined behaviour of non-human agents with human-like characteristics, motivations, intentions, or emotions. So its interpretation needs to go further than the investigation of the accuracy and functionality of anthropomorphic descriptions. Questions such as when and why people are likely to anthropomorphise non-human agents cannot be open to cross-cultural and diachronic answers. Pots and human bodies should both be taken in their ethnographic specificity (Ingold 2013: 29).

Using the example of Neolithic pottery from Dispilio, Northern Greece, I follow an alternative approach. My aim is to shed light on the relevance that pots decorated with human characteristics may acquire in their contexts of production and use, and on their social significance while enmeshed in relationships among themselves, other pots and potters. Human depictions on pots are examined in their associations and articulations with the rest of the ceramic assemblage and with their producers.

Dispilio site and the pottery study

The archaeological site of Dispilio, the first prehistoric lakeside settlement excavated in Greece, is located 7 km south of Kastoria in northern Greece, on the southern shore of the Orestias Lake. The

excavations at the site (Fig. 2.1) in four sectors have been carried out by the Department of Archaeology, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki since 1992 (Hourmouziadis 2002). To date, 5,250 sq m have been excavated of a total area of approximately 17,000 sq m. Radiocarbon dates indicate that the occupation began at the end of the Middle Neolithic period (5355 ± 125 cal. BC) and that the settlement was inhabited continuously until 3644 ± 118 cal. BC. It appears that the excavated site was eventually abandoned between 3530 and 2460 BC. There is also evidence of later occupation during the Bronze Age from 2300 ± 160 until 2129 ± 152 cal. BC (Facorellis *et al.* 2014).

The pottery study is still in progress although some parts of it have already been accomplished. It should be mentioned that all phases of the Neolithic settlement gave an enormous amount of pottery sherds. The research project “From sherd to pot”, organised by M. Sofronidou, has revealed a remarkable amount of whole pots or profiles, unique in the Neolithic ceramic assemblage of northern Greece. Because I consider it as most appropriate to support my theoretical approach, the restoration process of the vessels was adapted to my own study that focused on the decorated pottery from the transition from Middle to Late Neolithic (Voulgari 2011).

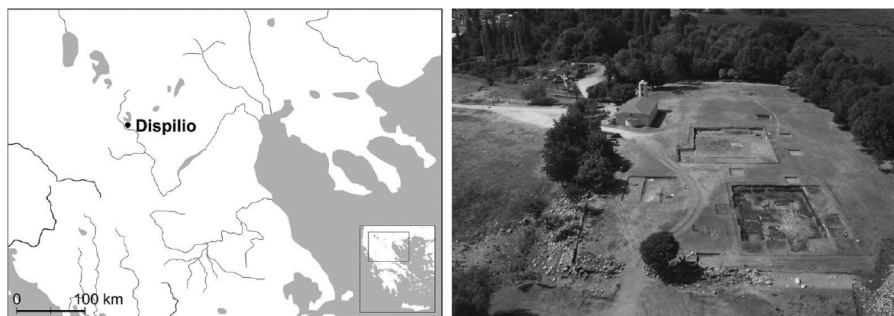


Figure 2.1: Map indicating Neolithic Dispilio and aerial photograph of the four main excavation sectors of the archaeological site.

According to this, decorated pots are examined as cultural entirieties, as specific cultural icons and not as simple bearers of cultural icons, “abstract” or “representational”. Decorative techniques, patterns, motifs, shapes and technological features of the pots are considered as parameters of a single process, none of them being primary or secondary, critical or restrictive; none of them being cut off from others, leading to more “explicit” evidence for the social meaning of decorated pots. Motifs do not simply decorate clay surfaces but concrete products of the material culture and their

significance lies on, precisely, this characteristic: they do not exist by themselves, but they take part in the construction of an artefact. In this line of thought, it could be suggested that a decorated pot does not represent something, but constitutes itself an icon, an entirety, a structure that is not identical to the simple sum of its parts, but includes the causal relationships of their interconnection. It constructs, in a sense, a “narrative”. Some of these narratives refer to human-like beings.

The construction of “human-like narratives”

The Neolithic potters of Dispilio decorated a large number of pots that show high variability in terms of their technology, function and overall style with human characteristics. Along with small and medium sized open vessels, associated with the consumption and serving of food, small and medium sized closed vessels for storage/serving/transferring of liquids, closed vessels with a long, narrow cylindrical neck and a flared T-shaped rim, and a miniature vessel resembling this shape, few long-term storage vessels were also recorded (Figs 2.2–2.5). It is noteworthy that the aforementioned group does not include a single cooking vessel. The most numerous are the black-burnished vessels for serving and consumption, an expected result, since, on the one hand, this ware is the most highly decorated in the Dispilio assemblage and, on the other, the contrast between decorated serving and undecorated cooking or long-term storage vessels is encountered widely in the Neolithic of Greece (Urem-Kotsou and Kotsakis 2007: 228). G. Naumov (2008: 96), analysing anthropomorphic pots of the Neolithic Balkan, notices that these pots received a special treatment, a treatment different from that of utilitarian vessels for everyday culinary use. But this does not seem to be the case in Neolithic Dispilio. According to observations made on the whole pottery assemblage, it seems that potters did not pay greater attention to the manufacture of these vessels than to the manufacture of others, decorated or not. They made them with almost all available clays, even with those used in architectural constructions. It seems that they decided on technological issues according to the pot’s function, rather than to what they depicted.

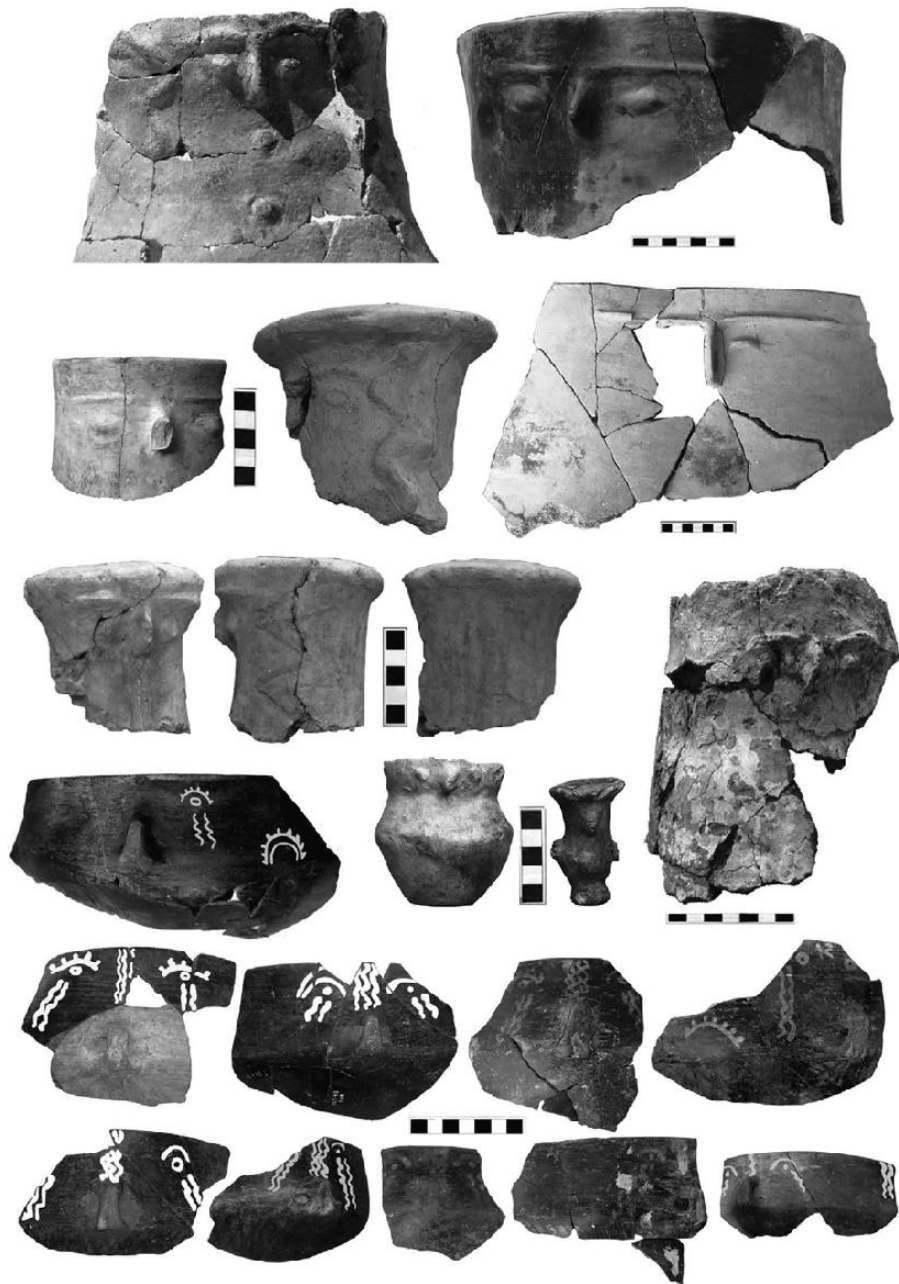


Figure 2.2: Vessels from Disipilio bearing human characteristics. They are dated to the transition from the Middle Neolithic to the Late Neolithic (the painted decoration on the black burnished ware has been digitally enhanced due to the poor conservation of the motifs).

As far as the decorative elements are concerned, the potters used three different ways to depict human characteristics:

- relief decoration

- combination of relief and incised technique
- combination of dull white painting, pattern burnishing and relief decoration on black burnished ware

Giving a brief description of their iconography, the Neolithic potters of Dispilio decorated their vessels always with only one human figure, depicting the facial details under the vessel's rim. Representations of mouth and ears are always lacking, while the nose, when present, is always marked with a relief ornament. It seems that in the majority of painted figures a motif of three vertical wavy lines or a motif with straight and wavy lines between the eyes has taken the place of the nose, a fact that contributed significantly to the difficulty in their identification before the restoration process. Besides the above-mentioned common characteristics, there are significant differences as far as their entire or partial human depiction is concerned. There are figures with a depicted head and body, some others with their face only, others with the whole head and, finally, some with their head and some additional elements underneath. Due to this variation, it cannot be presumed that a vessel in its entirety was conceived by Neolithic potters as a reference to the human body as a whole. Regarding the features depicted, there is also a conspicuous distinction among painted vessels and the others, and among painted vessels themselves.

Although only one anthropomorphic storage pot has been almost completely restored, it is almost certain that bodily features are most closely related to painted black burnished vessels. Furthermore, there is enough variation to suggest that these depictions are not manifestations of one human-like kind, while at the same time there is enough repetition to suggest that certain human-like kinds are related to certain vessel types. The only common feature of these kinds/types is a pair of oblique wavy lines beneath each eye. Elaborating this differentiation in more detail, it seems that open carinated vessels (Fig. 2.3), which are the most numerous, are decorated with:

- A pierced lug (with peculiar shape, placed just above the carination in the same axis as the motif between the eyes) with three small clay knobs around the carination and with shallow grooves at the carination and between the knobs.
- Pairs of wavy painted lines above each knob and in the spaces between them, on the upper vessel sections. These lines extend from the rim to the carination. Between them and just above the carination there are motifs of two concentric semicircles.
- On the lower body section, both inside and outside, there are four

vertical/oblique bands with crosshatching lines made with the pattern burnishing technique. Some vessels have also pairs of painted wavy lines above the inside pattern-burnished decoration. On the other hand, the decoration of wide-mouthed vessels is divided into three horizontal bands (Fig. 2.4):

- a first band just below the rim where the eyes of the figure, the motif between them, the pairs of wavy lines beneath them and groups of three vertical straight lines around the band are placed.
- a second band, just below the first band and extending to the carination, decorated with a pierced lug (the same as that of open vessels) with three vertical, plain or incised, plastic bands, two of which are placed on each side of the lug and the third is at the opposite side of the vessel. These bands are surrounded by a motif of straight vertical lines, while the lug is surrounded by oblique pairs of wavy lines.
- a third band covering the lower body section and again decorated with four vertical/oblique bands with crosshatching lines made with the pattern burnishing technique.

Finally, as far as closed vessels are concerned (Fig. 2.5), there is a variation of relief and painted motifs. No two alike or at least similar closed vessels have been found so far.

Through the study of all decorative patterns of the dull white painted ware, it became evident that the above-mentioned differentiation is not due to the vessel's shape. On the contrary, it has been found that there are no causal relationships between decorative patterns and the vessel's shape. The same decorative pattern was applied on a variety of vessel shapes regardless of their surface's potentials or restrictions, as e.g. it is shown in Fig. 2.7. Based on the above-mentioned it is tempting to suggest that the differentiations in human-like icons may imply variations within the Neolithic community. The different relief elements could represent, e.g. different gender indicators. G. Naumov (2008: 96; 2010: 5) notices that until his study on the anthropomorphic vessels from the Neolithic Balkans, no vessel was found on which male genitalia were depicted. The case of Dispilio, I think, contradicts this perception. However, the aim of my approach is rather to examine the representational signification of the decorative elements than interpreting them in terms of anatomical details. Besides, even if we presuppose that they reflect a biological substratum, the majority of the mentioned examples cannot hold explicit similarities to specific human bodily parts. Furthermore, the interpretation of the abstract motifs as body elements does not imply that they are concrete references to human bodies.

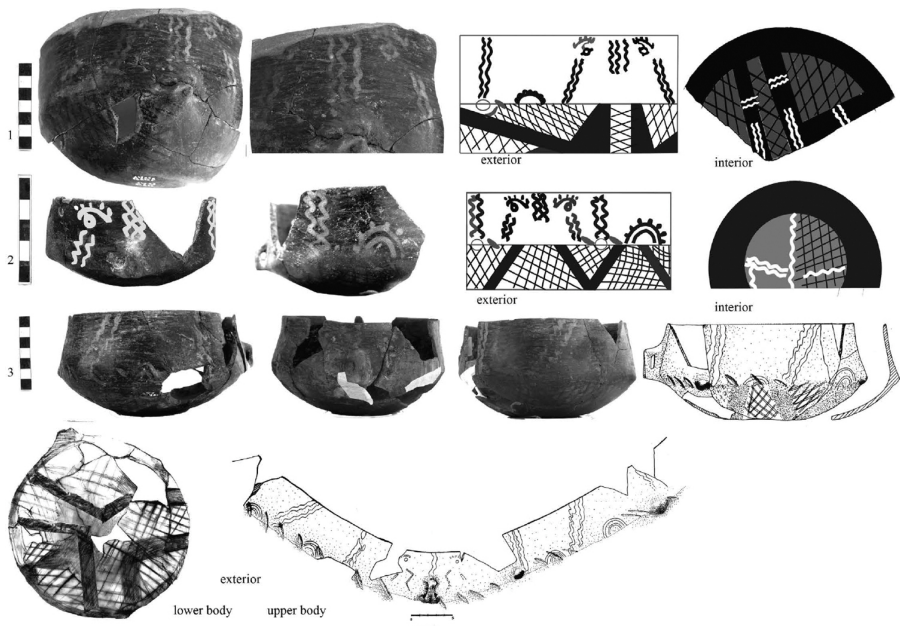


Figure 2.3: Open carinated black burnished vessels from Dispilio with painted human characteristics.

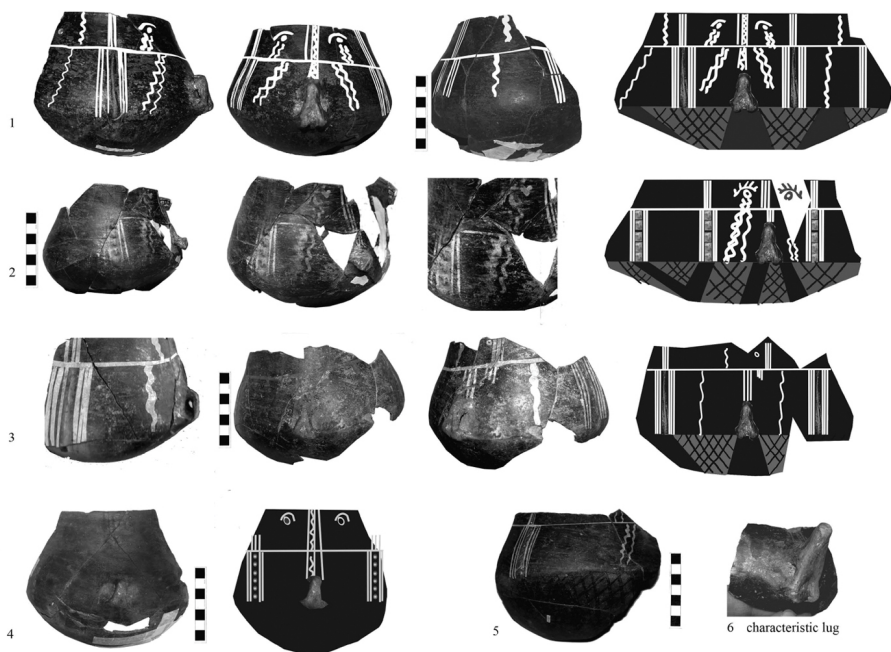


Figure 2.4: Wide-mouthed black burnished vessels from Dispilio with painted human characteristics.

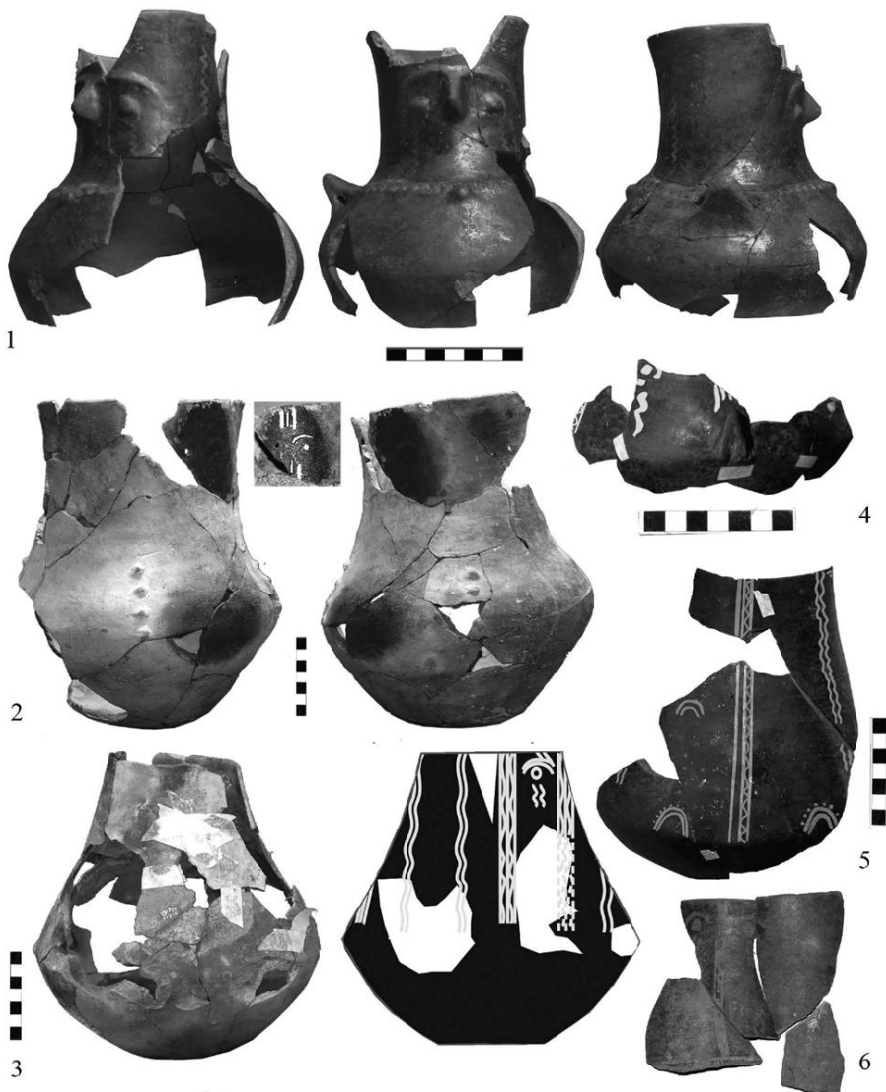


Figure 2.5: Closed black burnished vessels from Dispilio with painted human characteristics.

Having set out the particular form which the Neolithic potters of Dispilio used to give their pots a human-like appearance, in the following paragraphs I elaborate upon their iconography in more detail. I argue that the above-mentioned “abstract” and “linear” motifs refer to body elements based on their repeatability on pots decorated with facial characteristics, on their constant correlations with both facial characteristics and among each other, and also on their observed absence in other vessels’ icons. It is indicative that no single open black-burnished vessel elaborated only with pattern burnishing technique has bands with crosshatching lines. Therefore, I do not think that in the case of Dispilio there is a need to deal with the

dilemma posed in some studies whether such elements on anthropomorphic vessels were merely decorative or had also a symbolic function (Gimbutas 1989; Naumov 2008: 94). All the motifs of anthropomorphic vessels are decorative elements since they decorate ceramic surfaces and all of them constitute interrelated and equal elements of a whole, of a “human-like narrative”. For example, the fourteen wavy painted lines on the vessel in [Fig. 2.5](#) are related to the human being as well as to the two horizontal arcs joined to the prominent vertical triangle or to the two circular knobs that are placed under the arcs.

The aforementioned argument is not confirmed by similar patterns of human figurines from Dispilio. However, I don't think that it is undermined by the absence of a shared iconographic vocabulary between the products of two distinct activities, pots and figurines. On the contrary, it leads us to rethink earlier approaches seeking symbolic connections between pottery and figurines through shared motifs (Talalay 1993: 35), and reinforcing the distinction of motifs into two classes: those with symbolic content and those merely decorative. Based on the analysis I made of all decorative patterns in the Dispilio assemblage, this distinction cannot be established. All the linear compositions of the white painted, black-burnished pots are structural elements of specific cultural depictions, of specific cultural “narratives”. Some of these refer to human beings and some to other entities. Moreover, the search for a shared iconographic vocabulary between figurines and pots is based on the idea that beings exist as individuals with inherent attributes, anterior to their representation. That what is represented is held to be independent of all representation practices and thereby it is assumed that there are two distinct and independent kinds of entities – representations and entities to be represented (Barad 2003: 804).

If my argument is plausible, then there is one further implication I would like to explore. It concerns the correlation between human-like pots from Dispilio and pots with human characteristics from other Neolithic sites in Greece and the Balkans. Judging from the material published so far, human-like vessels from Dispilio constitute one of the most numerous assemblages in the Balkans. Whether they follow decorative traditions with broad geographical or chronological boundaries or constitute a characteristic of the Dispilio material culture, remains an open question. On the one hand, some of the iconographic elements or even the overall vessel's style have parallels in other Neolithic settlements. For example, the closed vessels with a long, narrow cylindrical neck and a flared T-shaped rim from Dispilio

with facial characteristics direct our attention to similar vessels found in other settlements in northern Greece (Kleitos I, Makrygialos I), Serbia and Bulgaria (Pileidou 2006: 142–43, 177; Naumov 2008: 95, 97, fig. 7; Ziota n.d.). The particular manner that plastic eyebrows and noses are joined creating an easily recognisable iconography of the human face, is common for vessels found in Sesklo and Makrygialos II of northern Greece, in Dunavec I–II of Albania and in several settlements in Former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Romania (Bessios and Adaktylou 2006: 366, Fig. 10; Pileidou 2006: 120; Naumov 2008: 94, 95, fig. 5). The plastic round knobs below the nose have been also found on a vessel from Dunavec I (Korkuti 1995: 113, tab. 41), while the group of three wavy lines in the place of a nose reminds of a similar pattern from a painted vessel with the depiction of a human face on both sides from the site Tsangli in Thessaly (Wace and Thomson 1912: 101, fig. 54a). Finally, one of the key features of human-like vessels from Dispilio, the absence of a mouth, characterises also many human depictions on Balkan pottery. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that, although the dull white painting on black burnished ware is widespread in the Aegean and the wider Balkan area (Andreou *et al.* 1996), for the depiction of human characteristics this technique is used at Dispilio only.

Regardless of whether or not the potters of Dipilio used iconographic types or decorative techniques similar to those from neighbouring or distant cultures, it seems that they have created their own “iconography”, their own narratives. These narratives can be characterised neither as “abstract” nor as “schematic”. In particular, the persistent absence of special facial features, such as mouth and ears, is undoubtedly not an issue of decorative technical skills or restrictions, nor can it be interpreted as the potters’ intent of concise representing (Pileidou 2006: 151). The plurality and variety of ornaments, on the one hand, and their use on particular wares on the other hand, seem to indicate quite the opposite. Based on their detailed analysis, the human-like depictions seem to be nothing but precise, a specific re-articulation of the world, a materialisation of the community’s discourse. Their producers deconstruct the visible object, the human being, in order to reconstruct it in a cultural object, a human-like vessel, and create images that have no counterparts in the real world. It seems that they thought these artefacts as an integral part of the material configuration of their world in its intra-active becoming (Barad 2003).

Bodily styles and rhythms of practices

Asking for ontologies other than modern Euro-Americans, some recent archaeological approaches of personhood and materiality have focused on relationships between bodies and pots (Fowler 2004; Alberti 2007, 2012). Pots are usually interpreted as a form of material discourse on the body, acting as metaphors of body features, such as processes of transformation and containment (Alberti 2014: 110). The function of pots as containers is frequently interpreted as a metaphorical relation to bodies, whether pots are likened to bodies (Mlekuz 2007; Nanoglou 2009) or bodies are likened to pots (Knappett *et al.* 2010). However, the generated idea of a body – human, animal or made of burned clay – as a container, seems to be self-evident, a “natural” ontological metaphor, suitable either for marking territorialities of entities, as G. Lakoff and M. Johnsen (Lakoff and Johnsen 2003: 26) laid out, or as a kind of vehicle that serves to extend the spatiotemporal range of a person’s movement, influence and experience, as T. Ingold (Ingold 2000: 100) proposed. Whatever its theoretical backgrounds may be, the introduction of the body-container model in Neolithic pottery studies has two implications that I would like to explore in brief. Firstly, in most cases there are no adequate data either about the various natural substances that enter and/or leave ceramic bodies, or about their cultural contents and consequently we cannot go further than general assumptions about their capacities or content. Secondly, in order for the model to function, a concrete vessel form is required. Form *represents* and, therefore, has the ability to give a vessel the role of a person in its own society. The role of the form remains *a priori* distinct from the role of the vessel shape and its correlations. As E. Viveiros de Castro points out referring to Aristotelian thinking:

it seems that form is the soul, and the soul is difference that gives unity and purpose to a being; body is matter and matter is sameness and indifference (Viveiros de Castro 2012: 135).

It seems that a vessel becomes a person only when it bears a concrete, “differentiated” form – anthropomorphic or zoomorphic and consequently undecorated or “merely” decorated vessels possess no “form” and are not correlated to a container.

The interpretation of pots as a form of material discourse on the body is based again on a circular logic. As B. Alberti points out, conceptualising bodies on the one hand, and pots on the other hand, establishes a framework for thinking about body-pots, in which the latter are conceived as artefacts that incorporate meanings about bodies into pots; and those meanings reflect that very idea – that the body is fabricated just like the pot (Alberti 2014: 109). In support of

his argument, one further point could be added. In order for either the body-container model or the body-pot scheme to function, they presuppose not only a concrete form, but one single form in each case. The limitations of these correlations become clear in the case of the pottery from Dispilio, where next to anthropomorphic vessels also zoomorphic and boat-shaped vessels have been found (Fig. 2.6). And furthermore, there are many x-morphic vessels (Fig. 2.7). By the term x-morphic vessels I do not imply that all decorated pots represent natural archetypes, but I describe these icons, although unrecognizable to us – but by no means amorphous – for their producers and users they seem to be as important as the recognisable ones. Interpreting this entire polymorphous, contextually undifferentiated assemblage as forms of material discourses on bodies is leading nowhere faster. The plasticity of clay might imbue ceramic technology with a protean ability to take on the appearance and form of any container (Knappett *et al.* 2010: 593), but it is not adequate, on its own, to interpret either the simultaneous representations of different containers or the exclusion of others.



Figure 2.6: Zoomorphic and boat-shaped vessels from Dispilio (not to scale).

In order to shed light on the social meaning of these artefacts, we need to go beyond the morphological analysis which, to paraphrase J. Derrida (2005: 152),

can be taken very far [...] but it hardly seems risky. It belongs to the order of calculable guarantees and decidable evidence.

Taking T. Ingold's view that human-like pots incorporate in their

bodily form the rhythms of the practices that gave rise to them (Ingold 2000: 193), anthropomorphic pots from Dispilio are examined not as self-sufficient unities that shift freely between the contexts and exist independently of the relations in which they are involved, but as entities in their associations and articulations with the rest of the material culture and with their producers. Consequently, the question that arises is not about their materiality, but about the practices in which they were taking part. In the majority of Neolithic Balkan settlements, human representations are particularly associated with figurines. However, in Dispilio, since human figurines and pendants are sparse, it seems that the category of material culture most closely associated with human imagery is pottery. Sherds of anthropomorphic vessels were found together with undecorated and other decorated ones all over the excavated site and, although, based on the architectural remains, it is difficult to identify specific activity areas in the settlement, it is clear that their context was not spatially separated. It is also clear that most of them belong to the black-burnished ware, a ware associated with the consumption and serving of food, either individually or in small-scale groups.

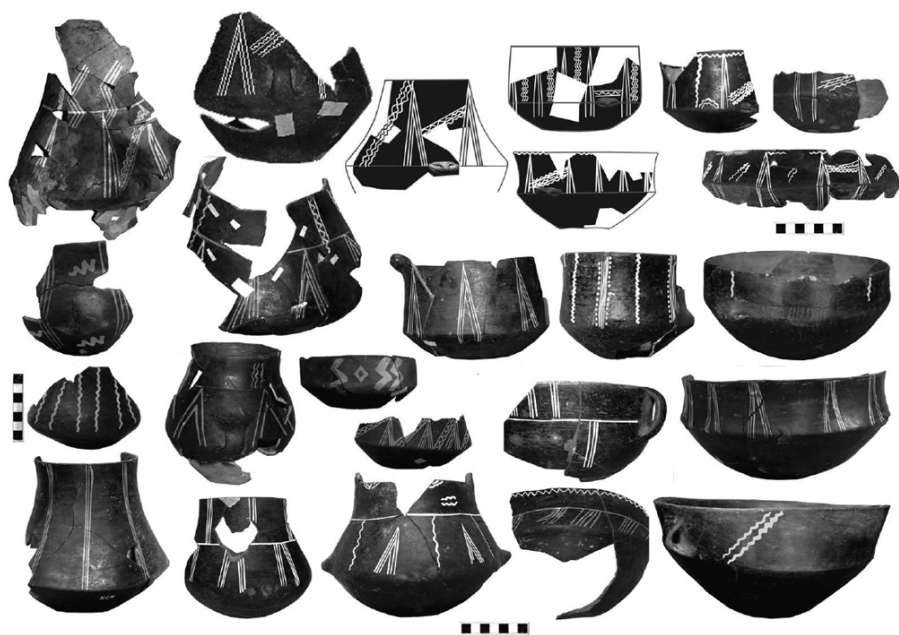


Figure 2.7: Variety of “x-morphic” black burnished vessels from Dispilio with painted decoration.

The black-burnished ware on the one hand shows high technological homogeneity (e.g. fabric and surface treatment) and on the other hand high variability in terms of shape, size and decoration. The potters chose among a number of options for elaborating the

majority of them (approximately 70%). So there are pots without further elaboration or with applied, impressed or incised patterns, burnished or, more often, painted decoration, and sometimes with combinations of several of these techniques. The wide range of choices and correlations alongside with an also wide range of shapes, sizes, decorations, and motifs suggests that the potters followed loosely a recipe, with few “rules” apart from the need to make each black-burnished vessel a distinctive icon, an individual narrative. Remembering the container metaphor, it could be said that the containers should be kept distinct from each other, although the content was more or less the same. Anthropomorphic vessels have almost the same use wear as the rest. However, it should be noted that the anthropomorphic bowls are the only black-burnished bowls which have painted decoration inside. The fact that the figurative nature of the dull white paint did not discourage its use on the interior surfaces of these specific vessels may indicate a special kind of food or a difference in its serving or consumption process. Apart from this, however, the anthropomorphic icons do not prevail, in any sense, over the other x-morphic icons, of which the most common are those on the upper part in [Fig. 2.7](#). There is nothing to indicate that the former were more present in the Neolithic inhabitants’ world than the latter.

But besides the black-burnished vessels – anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and x-morphic – the Neolithic inhabitants also used another type of vessel in their serving and consuming practices, the high-pedestalled “fruitstands” ([Fig. 2.8](#)). It is probably the most characteristic type of the Dispilio pottery assemblage. It is a quite common vessel – the restoration project has yielded until now more than 100 fruitstands from approximately 62% of the sherds – which are almost always decorated (91,6%). The wide range of its size indicates varied uses. Therefore, it is more plausible that some were used as drinking cups for individual consumption rather than for serving food. But besides its varying sizes, this type of tableware is marked by a high homogeneity and, moreover, its overall style comes in sharp contrast to that of the black-burnished ware. The potters followed another strategy for their elaboration; they decorated these vessels with two similar painted techniques which they used exclusively for their elaboration. No other vessel type was painted like these. Using two pigments in one technique, they always were painted all over the surfaces – exterior, interior and the pedestals – and almost always with the same patterns made up of a small number of motifs. Produced with concrete and stable technological and decorative rules, the fruitstands seem to be distinguished from all other tableware; their

icons are in any case almost alike, but at the same time very different from the icons of the black-burnished vessels.

Applying the same methodology to all decorated pots, it seems that their production is dictated by specific norms of the community determining their overall style. Thus, Neolithic potters produced icons of their world, that either we can recognise as humans, animals, boats, or that remain unrecognisable and could, therefore, be called x-morphic. These icons seem to be necessary “tools” rather than “decorative” elements.

It seems also that the anthropomorphic vessels were not a discrete class of objects, nor formed they a specialised component within the wider assemblage of tableware. What follows their analysis is that all decorated pots, regardless of their narrative theme, did not just adorn the world of their producers and users, but rather fulfilled it during mealtime. They were not functional objects plus images, but it seems that they could not function without their images. The fruitstands, indistinguishable in terms of their narrative theme, were standing out from the rest of the tableware and were gaining higher visibility due to their shape, their light-coloured surfaces and their wide and continuous decorative bands. The black-burnished vessels, resembling each other closely in their overall technological style, seem to acquire some kind of individuality through different decorative techniques or through different decorative patterns. Among this variety of icons, the depictions of human beings, living or dead, real or mythical, were but one icon out of many. Having neither a mouth to breath or speak, nor ears to hear and with their large eyes wide open, they were silent participants in everyday food serving and consuming practices. Neolithic people used them mostly as an integral part of their everyday activities instead as goods in special and occasional social events or in the development of exchange networks. Staking out my position, it seems that Neolithic people needed their tacit presence next to themselves and next to other numerous x-morphic vessels in order to negotiate through them and among many others, their ontological status during the consumption of daily meals.



Figure 2.8: Synthesis of high-pedestalled “fruitstands” from Dispilio with painted decoration.

Conclusion

In the light of their detailed analysis, it can be concluded that the anthropomorphic pots indicate not an anthropocentric perspective of the Neolithic inhabitants of Dispilio, although this is proposed for Neolithic Thessaly (Nanoglou 2008a: 8, 10; Nanoglou 2009: 199) as well as for the Balkans in general (Naumov 2010). Human-like pots from Dispilio were ordinary artefacts, necessary equipment for daily practices, and one possible narrative scenario out of many during the production of the black-burnished ware. In the repertoire of Dispilio pottery they constitute, following Y. Marshall’s distinction, rather lived than inscribed objects, acquiring their meaning in the context of social action (Marshall 2008: 63–65). Their meaning is not prescribed by their form but lies in the experience of their affects. And probably

this is the reason for their disappearance from the ceramic assemblage of the next settlement phase. It may be no coincidence that in this next phase, potters of Dispilio abandoned the use of the dull white painting technique and the pots' icons associated with it completely, replacing black-burnished with black-topped ware. It may be no coincidence that, on the contrary, some other pots' icons, such as those of the fruitstands, continue to exist. And last but not least, it may be no coincidence that we have not yet proceeded that much with the study of this next phase.

Acknowledgments

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¹The terms “anthropomorphic” and “zoomorphic” are usually used in archeological papers without further explanation, referring sometimes to the decoration of the vessels’ surfaces with human or animal characteristics, and sometimes to the vessels’ shape that mimics the structure of a human or animal body. K. Pileidou (2006: 106–07), examining the pottery depictions of human body during the neolithic period in Balkans, proposes the term “anthropomorphic vessels” for vessels that are not changed in their structure in order to give the desired anthropomorphism, and “anthropomorphous vessels” for those whose shape mimics fi gurine types. In the same vein, H. Schwarzberg (2010: 137) referring to face depictions in Neolithic pottery from southern Germany distinguishes “anthropomorphe Gefäße” from “Gesichtsgefäße”. Other scholars use terms such as face-pot, body-pot, according to which human part is depicted. In this article the term anthropomorphic is used to refer to all these distinctions for the reasons presented below.

Chapter 3

The corporeality of vessels: Neolithic anthropomorphic pottery in the Republic of Macedonia

Goce Naumov

The human body was significantly considered in the archaeological research. The represented and physical body was often observed through contextual and theoretical perspectives and therefore new approaches to its understanding were proposed. Consequently, the body was not only viewed as a biological or visual unit, but its social and symbolic features were asserted as well. As a result, to the momentous impact of corporeality theories in sociology and anthropology, the human body in archaeology was perceived as a complex social structure involved in a number of economic and ritual processes in past societies. It was not merely seen as an artefact or skeletal find, but also as a reference for the embodiment of households, institutions, items and social standards of various communities and their landscape. The same approach was applied in prehistoric archaeology as well in order to understand the modes of body engagement within societies without written records. Nevertheless, besides the variety of attempts to explain prehistoric corporeality in different parts of the world (Meskell 1996; Joyce 2008), there is still not much written on Neolithic bodies in southeast Europe, except numerous reports on figurines and burials.

These reports describe the appearance and context of archaeological data and give exceptional information of its elementary features, but do not include a more thorough theoretical perspective of corporeality associated with Neolithic finds in southeast Europe. Several publications are an exception and provide a more extensive elaboration of figurines and burials as crucial components of

corporeality in the first farming societies in the Balkans (Bailey 2005; Stefanovic 2006; Nanoglou 2006; Naumov 2014). They propose a more complex engagement of the human body and its involvement in visual issues, identity, economy and rituals of the first farmers in the region.

The first agricultural communities in Europe significantly changed the landscape and societies which were previously based on hunter-gatherer economy (Champion *et al.* 1984; Jones 2008). The introduction of farming, the employment of pottery or the domestication of plants and animals were only a few of the components which transformed the social and natural environment. The process of domestication does not regard only plants, animals and dwellings, but the human body as well. The physical body was not altered, but its understanding and the role it played in the social and symbolic processes among farming communities. The various human representations and intramural skeletal remains indicate the broadened scope of body engagement and its impact in the embodiment of Neolithic households.

Neolithic embodiment

The sudden appearance of figurines and anthropomorphic hybrids in the Neolithic additionally supports the significant social transformations in southeast Europe (Hansen 2007; Naumov 2009), a region which does not feature human representations in the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic. Representations and burials both indicate the important role of the body in the establishment of social and symbolic principles in the Neolithic and the standardisation of norms apparent in visual culture and rituals. Theories on habitus in past societies (Bourdieu 1990) are also relevant for Neolithic finds associated with the human body as they were engaged in the embodiment of social structures. The visual features of figurines and the context of skeletal remains apparently resemble what is referred to as body techniques (Mauss 1979). The standardised positions and contexts of individuals in burials or certain depictions of humans in the Neolithic Balkans further emphasise the body as a medium for the absorption of social norms and their manifestation through representations or rituals. Considering the phenomenology of the body (Merleau-Ponty 1962) and the variety of ceramic anthropomorphic hybrids in southeast Europe, it is apparent that corporeality was the main reference in the establishment of the relationship with the manmade environment of agricultural societies.

Even though miniature representations, figurines, anthropomorphic

vessels or humanlike house models were a materialisation of Neolithic habitus and body techniques, they were embedded within physical bodies and social norms individually. Determined in a particular context, the represented and biological bodies could both be observed as material culture (Sofaer Derevenski 2000), so that they depicted and implemented the habitus intended to be objectified or ritualised. The figurines' appearance or body postures in burials were social modes of corporeality determined by various institutions within Neolithic communities. Anthropomorphic representations and intramural burials were employed in the process of agency (Dobres and Robb 2000), especially serving as agents between collective principles and symbolic embodiment of the society. They were much more than clay objects or dead individuals dispersed throughout settlements, and thousands of such finds at sites in southeast Europe confirm their complex engagement within the corporeality of a Neolithic habitus.

Although they lack facial features, figurines or buried individuals still accentuate the identity of particular persons or a community as they often address apparent visual messages through postures, ornaments and accented attributes or by the context of their deposition. The demonstration of individuality and personhood are often proposed as plausible for the European Neolithic (Fowler 2004), thus the represented miniatures or buried bodies resemble particular individuals or were the physical evidence of someone's intention to assert their own personhood. Even though they belong to different symbolical media and practices, anthropomorphic representations and burials deal with similar issues of corporeality and formalise a common notion of social bodies. Sex and gender are the potentially most apparent components of identity (Butler 1993), and they were often indicated with a variety of features on miniature representations or with the ornaments and gifts associated with buried individuals. Some of the anthropomorphic images modelled in clay are far beyond a regular notion of identity and contend sexuality (Joyce 2005), whilst burial patterns often indicate the preference of a particular age within intramural funerary rituals (Baxter 2005; Naumov 2013a). Despite the different social character of representations and burials, the variety of archaeological contexts indicates that they were intertwined within the multi-layered implementation of corporeality. They both deal with the human body and its materialisation as a social and symbolic entity.

The human body becomes a symbolic focal point in the Neolithic of southeast Europe. Domestication was a process that does not consider

only plants and animals, but humans and the environment they created as well (Hodder 1990). In such an environment where subsistence, dwellings and projections were under man's control, the human body was established as a central figure for symbolic communication and social interaction. This setting was a solid platform for the flourishing of anthropomorphism, a cognitive, narrative and visual concept that identifies items, natural phenomena, living beings or deities with humans (Durkheim 1964; Guthrie 2014). Consequently, in southeast Europe, an area where hunter-gatherers previously did not depict the human body, thousands of anthropomorphic figurines were produced along with the introduction of agriculture. Furthermore, in the process of Neolithisation the human body was symbolically and visually associated with solid houses, vessels, ovens, and stamps which announced hybridism as one of the most potent social metaphors in the era of the first farming communities (Naumov 2009). The concept of the metaphoric body as a hybrid in the Balkans is initiated in the Mesolithic and regarded as a variety of symbolic and visual principles (Handsman 1991; Borić 2007). Gradually this cognitive notion in the Neolithic was supported with the massive production of clay vessels, miniature household items, house and oven models shaped as the human body or depicting its parts (Naumov 2010a). The extensive employment of humanlike miniatures and anthropomorphic hybrids asserts the body as a central metaphor in the understanding of the manmade environment and social interaction in the Neolithic.

Pottery and the body

The incorporation of pottery as a novel medium in the Neolithic is a crucial factor in its further employment within visual culture. Besides the broad engagement of pottery for common purposes it is also involved in spheres of symbolic communication. There are discussions about the use of ceramic vessels since the Upper Palaeolithic (Bougard 2003; Budja 2003; Gheorghiu 2008), but in the Balkans they were initially introduced along with the so-called "Neolithic Package". Such a rapid integration of pottery in the Balkans surely had a significant impact on its understanding and especially on the indigenous communities which had their first interaction with items made of clay. If we consider that this novel Anatolian import was modified in various directions, then it is apparent how potent the effect was that the vessels had in the emphasis of local identities and the cognitive horizons of the first agricultural societies in the Balkans. The Neolithic communities widely employed vessels in a process of identity

affirmation and especially in the initial phases of this period (Naumov 2009; Naumov 2010a). This engagement of pottery was present not only on the level of social relations, but pottery was also furthermore employed as a symbolic agent.

Apart from the practical use of clay in everyday life, it was also incorporated into the concepts of corporeality and body representations. On the one hand, it was used in the production of figurines which are subject to constant interpretations and speculations ranging from individuals to goddesses (Gimbutas 1989; Bailey 2005; Lesure 2011). But on the other hand, clay played a significant role in the establishment of the relationship between the body and vessels, dwellings, ovens, stamps, etc. Such an integration of ceramics into the process of symbolic hybridisation intended to strengthen the significance of these items (Fig. 3.1), but also to explain their symbolic operation through the biological functions of the human body (Naumov 2010b). Consequently, the anthropomorphic vessels most consistently embodied a semiotic association between the human body and the pottery, mainly due to their visual resemblance (therefore terms such as neck, shoulder, leg, or belly are still used in their description). The engagement of anthropomorphic vessels in almost all regions of the Balkans additionally asserts the effect they had in the symbolic and ritual identification of the body and pottery. This mutual functional interconnection on a symbolic level is common as well in the forthcoming prehistoric stages and continues even in the Classical period and the Middle Ages (Naumov 2013a).

The production of anthropomorphic vessels in the Bronze and Iron Ages, their employment in the Hellenic and Roman Classical eras as well as in the iconographic identification of vessels with particular Christian characters (represented on frescoes and icons) further endorses the symbolic potential embedded in these objects. The potency and consistency of the relationship between the body and the vessel was recently still manifest among archaic societies in Africa, Asia and the Americas. Therefore, considering such an intensive continuity of pottery hybridism, future research on anthropomorphic vessels should be focused on how and in which context this relationship was manifest in the Neolithic or any other particular period in prehistory. The Neolithic was the first evolutionary stage of the pottery anthropomorphisation in the Balkans, and it is significant to understand how it initially started and why it was employed among the first agricultural societies.



Figure 3.1: Anthropomorphic house model, Porodin, h. 25.5 cm (Kolištrkovska-Nasteva 2005: fig. 43).

Anthropomorphic vessels in the Republic of Macedonia

Despite the large number of excavations, not many anthropomorphic vessels were unearthed at Neolithic sites in the Republic of Macedonia (Fig. 3.2). Compared to the huge quantity of anthropomorphic house models and figurines, vessels with human features are only few and mainly preserved in fragments. Besides two complete finds, the majority consists only of parts of faces or hands although some other elements of vessels could be contributed which do not depict limbs, torso or head. They are rarely included in publications and therefore, most of the information regarding their context, appearance and material is missing. Only few reports deal with anthropomorphic vessels, and moreover, they are only listed in the illustrations without a particular description and detailed explanation (Grbić *et al.* 1960; Garašanin and Garašanin 1961; Galović 1964; Garašanin *et al.* 1971; Simoska and Sanev 1975; Sanev and Stamenova 1989). For the moment, the only exception is the monograph on Amzabegovo where all fragments considered as anthropomorphic vessels are intently

described (Gimbutas 1976). Apart from this publication, Neolithic pottery depicting the human body was analysed in its geographical context, but also a typology was proposed and symbolic components incorporated within these specific household items were described (Naumov 2008; Naumov 2011). Although modest, the current data on anthropomorphic vessels in Macedonia provides initial information on their varieties and the semantic features they bear, which can be further used for a more thorough explanation of their employment and significance.

In order to understand anthropomorphic vessels with respect to Neolithic embodiment and corporeality, it is necessary to determine their major visual categories and apparent features. For the moment, only three main categories could be asserted, although they are based mostly on fragments which indicate these varieties. It should be noted that the facial features of these humanlike vessels are often similar to those of the anthropomorphic house models and therefore are not consistently defined. However, there are apparent indicators which distinguish the anthropomorphic vessels from the faces on the cylinders of house models regarding the interior manufacture, the fabric, the modelling of the eyes etc. Considering other parts, they are clearly defined as distinct anthropomorphic items and therefore subdivided into three major categories.

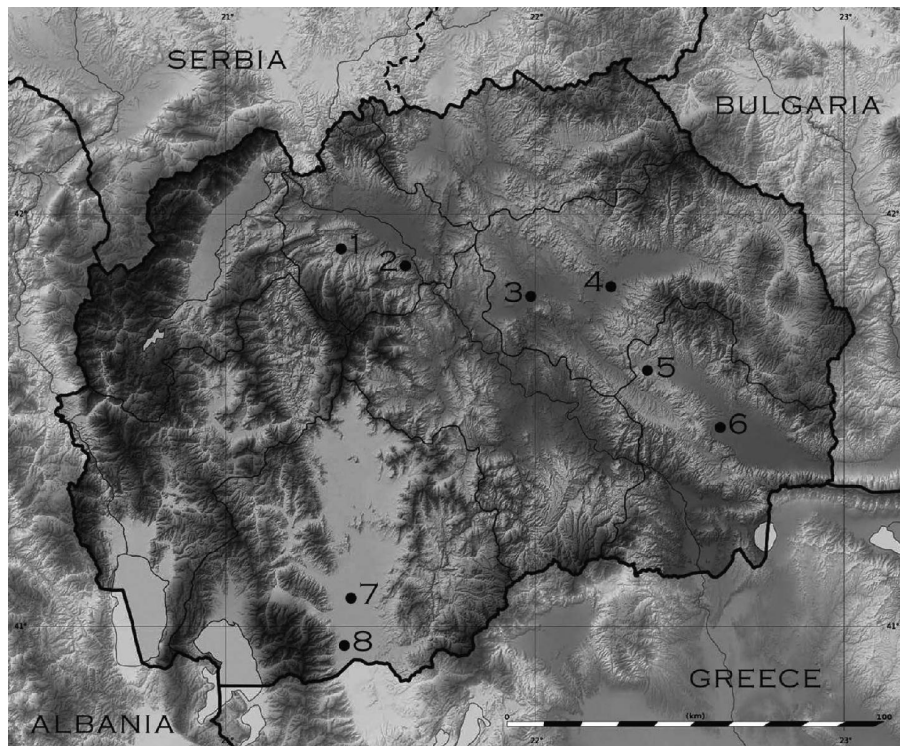


Figure 3.2: Map of the Republic of Macedonia with sites where anthropomorphic vessels were unearthed. 1. Govrlevo; 2. Zelenikovo; 3. Amzabegovo; 4. Tarinci; 5. Damjan; 6. Angelci; 7. Trn; 8. Porodin.

Vessels modelled as the complete human body

There are not many preserved anthropomorphic vessels which represent the complete human body due to the frequent state of fragmentation of these artefacts. They mainly depict a stylised body outline with a face, but often without limbs or other human features. The anthropomorphic vessel from Amzabegovo is one of the biggest found in Macedonia; its height is nearly 90 cm (Fig. 3.3). It can most likely be dated to the Late Neolithic, and its context indicates only that it came from the upper part of square XIII (Gimbutas 1976). The body is simply designated by the vessel's shape and the face features painted oblique lines, but there are no genitalia, hands, or legs which could point to a particular gesture or gender of the represented character. The painted V-lines on its torso could represent hands, ornaments, a dress or belt, but at this stage it is hard to determine them precisely. Nevertheless, this vessel represents a static individual which should contain material stored in this object (cereals or liquids), and these two are set in a semiotic relationship, *i.e.* the stored material should be symbolically protected by the depicted character, or it represents someone who could be associated with the provision,

control and processing of cereals, water or milk deposited inside.

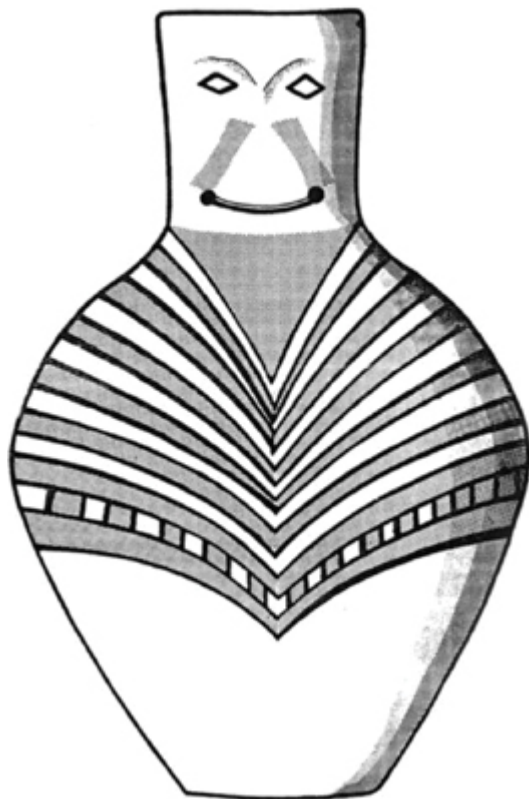


Figure 3.3: Anthropomorphic vessel, Amzabegovo, h. 92 cm (Gimbutas 1976: fig. 209).

There are a few more similar face fragments from Amzabegovo, but they could also be parts of anthropomorphic house models as they have similar facial features (Naumov 2008). Since they consist only of fragments of pottery, it cannot be determined whether they originally belonged to this type of anthropomorphic vessels. There is also a Late Neolithic vessel from Damjan which could represent the complete human body, but there are many parts missing from the lower half (Sanev 1996). Due to inconsistent reconstruction, it is not clear whether the modeled hand on the abdomen belongs to this artefact or some other vessel. The depiction of the face is significantly different than that on the finds from Amzabegovo: It consists of a triangular shape, applied coffee bean eyes, nose and ears. There are also applied breasts which indicate gender; therefore, this vessel represents a different character than the one represented on the vessel at Amzabegovo.¹ Despite the visual differences this individual as well was identified with the function of a vessel and its capability to contain some material. It remains to be resolved whether the depicted

characters comprised the same symbolic components or whether they are engaged in different semiotic processes.

Vessels modeled as the lower half of the human body

The representation of a vessel as a complete human body features a much more apparent visual association than those representations that depict only a part of it. The altered modes of body perception or selected representations of only particular body parts invoke an entirely different understanding of embodied objects. Instead of an actual portrayal of a human corpus, some vessels were the result of the focus on only certain segments like the head, the hands or legs. There is a variety of such anthropomorphic vessels in the Balkans and the majority produced in Neolithic Macedonia were of this category (Naumov 2008). The question appears why the farming communities were more concentrated on such vessels instead of actual portrayals? Several anthropomorphic vessels unearthed at Tarinci, Trn or Porodin could contribute to such a discussion and will be elaborated in detail as a final conclusion of this paper.

The anthropomorphic vessel from Tarinci is one of the best preserved in Macedonia. It is shaped as the lower half of a human body and depicts polished massive buttocks, *i.e.* legs decorated with incised triangle patterns organised in horizontal or zig-zag lines (Fig. 3.4). It was found in a Middle Neolithic context, which unfortunately is not described in detail (Garašanin and Garašanin 1961). Nevertheless, in spite of the unknown spatial context, the micro-context confirms a necklace made of river shells deposited within this vessel. The deposition of such an item is rather surprising as most archaeologists speculated that anthropomorphic vessels contained liquids and food. It remains to be discussed if there was a mutual relationship between the necklace and the function of vessel and thus with the represented character. Regarding the human depiction, it should be asserted that most likely a female individual is represented as the majority of figurines with large buttocks sport female genitalia, while there are no male equivalents with this feature (Naumov 2014).

Consequently, the question appears whether the necklace belonged to the represented individual or whether it had a protective character? It is even more dubious why there is no depiction of the upper part of the human body, particularly where a necklace is worn and most visible. If the incised patterns are considered, there is also a possibility that the deposited ornaments were represented by the lines of small triangles. That way they could be worn on the waist or hanging in lines on the legs and could thus be directly associated with the

represented female individual. This could partly resolve the motives for a deliberate exclusion of the upper body part and the concentration only on the buttocks, *i.e.* legs. The accentuation of the buttocks and their decoration could be also associated with female attributes of fertility and could be symbolically identified with the function of vessels as containers, providers of food and insurers of life (Naumov 2006).



Figure 3.4: Anthropomorphic vessel, Tarinci, h. 7.5 cm (Kolištrkovska-Nasteva 2005: fig. 27).

Vessels modelled as a head

The head is a major indicator of identity, but it is uncommon to be identified with a vessel. Nonetheless, there are a few anthropomorphic vessels in the Neolithic Balkans which entirely depict the head or there are particular facial features modelled on pottery that designate the vessel as a head (Gimbutas 1982; Todorova and Vaisov 1993). It is still questionable how an object associated with the complete human body could be also equalled with the head, but the visual and qualitative components of torso and head as containers symbolically justify their semiotic identification with vessels. Therefore, a vessel that represents the head depicts an individual who possesses or

controls the deposited material or is engaged with its protection (Naumov 2013a).

There are only few Neolithic anthropomorphic vessels in Macedonia which apparently accent the head as the main visual metaphor. One of the most specific is the foot of a cup with a modelled big nose and applied oval eyes found at Trn (Simoska and Sanev 1976). In this case the face of the represented individual is displayed only on the vessel's foot whereas its container (*i.e.* the belly) is too badly damaged to determine other anthropomorphic features (hair, for example). The vessel is identified with a particular person and their identity, but not with their entire body and some other attributes beside the head. Apparently, this vessel is focused on an utterly different visual segment, so it should be discussed whether it comprises the same symbolic features as those that represent the complete body or only exaggerated buttocks.

Another anthropomorphic vessel where the head is identified with the container is a miniature artefact from Porodin which due to its appearance is often referred to as an “altar” (Grbić *et al.* 1960). It depicts a face on the exterior surface of a shallow recipient placed on three legs (Fig. 3.5). The presence of legs and a wide recipient indicate a sort of humanlike outline of this object, but the entire focus of the anthropomorphic features is on the upper part. It is evident that the head is entirely identified with the vessel's recipient, thus asserting its symbolic component as a container or provider of whatever was processed inside.



Figure 3.5: Anthropomorphic vessel ("altar"), Porodin, h. 6.7 cm (Simoska and Sanev 1976: fig. 89).

Besides these two vessels there is also another Middle Neolithic find regarding the specific treatment of the head and its relationship with a vessel. An unusual humanlike face was modelled onto a handle or hollow application of a vessel unearthed at Govrlevo (Bilbija 1986). Due to its fragmentation, it could not be determined whether it belongs to a vessel shaped as a human or animal body. Even the particular representation of the face contributes to its ambiguous biological character and impedes its explanation. Nevertheless, it is important that a significant accent was placed on the head and the uncommon figure identified with the vessel, largely different from those previously elaborated. Regarding the site of Govrlevo it is important to note that there are a number of fragments that belong to anthropomorphic lids for pottery (Naumov 2011). The communities in the Late Neolithic Balkans are frequently engaged in the production and employment of such items (Stanković 1986; Nikolić and Vuković 2008). Although these lids are part of a set which in total resembles the human body, still they function as individual objects associated exclusively with the head. If not placed onto vessels they could be

used as pots for consumption as well. Thus, the relationship between head and vessel is accented in various directions and most probably involves different characters identified with the items intended for storage or consumption of food.

Personified objects or objectified persons

The variety of anthropomorphic vessels indicates that the human body was not engaged symbolically in a single formal way. Some were accenting the head or buttocks in particular while many others depicted the complete human body. This specifies the fact that different body parts were selected to accent the relationship between the function of vessels and a distinct corporal area. It is still unclear whether the selected part modelled as a vessel (the buttock vessel from Tarinci, for example) was identified with an individual or whether the biological function of this part was associated with the use of a ceramic container? This is much easier to determine wherever there are vessels modelled as a head or if at least a face is represented on them. But even in these cases it still remains unclear in which direction the hybridisation between a person and object was directed. Were the vessels anthropomorphised or, vice versa, were the represented characters objectified? In order to propose plausible explanations for such a complex engagement of semiotics and visual culture a consideration of several symbolic and imagery processes is necessary.

The anthropomorphic vessels are apparently a miniature hybrid representation of the human body. Most of these vessels are even smaller than pottery frequently used for cooking, storing or consumption. Consequently, they are reduced images of the body and contain significantly less than the majority of vessels. These two components designate the potential semiotic mechanism incorporated within humanlike containers. The notion of Neolithic miniaturism was observed mainly in regard to figurines and intended to explain how minuscule body representations were perceived and employed among farming societies (Stewart 1993; Bailey 2005). They were engaged in an alternative reality where miniatures had a significant role in the reconstruction and embodiment of identity, narration, social principles, mythology, or didactics. Therefore, the miniatures provoke a diverse responsiveness and an involvement of participants that recreates a particular narrative or setting. In other words, they are micro-images of something which should be accented, often even more than with life-sized participants.

On the other hand, the second component, *i.e.* storing or containing,

is quite an opposite concept, but apparently important even with miniature hybrids. The practice of storing was discussed often in the context of subsistence and social negotiations or status gain in European prehistory (Margomenou 2008; Cunningham 2011). Vessels as containers were employed as storage devices and were intended to preserve, transform or serve food and liquids. Initially the same function is incorporated in anthropomorphic vessels, but due to their specific visual features they were embedded with further meanings and engagements. At this instance, it seems that the concept and practice of storage and containment collides with the notion of miniaturism, as the major role of storage devices is to accumulate a larger quantity of food within. But on a semiotic level they mutually contribute regarding the symbolic potency of hybridism, *i.e.* the intertwining of two or more different components into one single cognitive entity. Whatever was stored inside anthropomorphic vessels was apparently more symbolically intensified than the groceries deposited in usual pottery.

In this context, storage could be considered as a symbolic category particularly manifest in pottery and its capacity to contain. The accumulation of food is identified with wealth and its quantity is associated with the social status of a household, thus storage primarily gains economic symbolism. But in regard to vessels with human depictions such symbolism is furthermore associated with anthropomorphism, and vice versa the body is identified with the container. The role of anthropomorphism and the personification of objects, animals, phenomena and notions was considered a significant component in cognition and visual culture among past societies (Durkheim 1964; Guthrie 2014). As a semiotic and symbolic concept, it was conceived in the Upper Palaeolithic, but the most potent incorporation of anthropomorphism exploded broadly with the first farming communities in Asia Minor and southeast Europe and especially with the implementation of clay and pottery (Naumov 2010b). Besides on figurines anthropomorphism was applied also on household items such as stamps and tablets, but involved pottery as well. This category of anthropomorphism which integrates the human body and household items into a single entity is considered hybridism. Hybridism involves not only a body and object relationship, but also human and animal visual interaction (Boric 2007; Naumov 2009). In sum, all these aspects of corporeality are primarily semiotic mechanisms which more thoroughly emanate their messages than just an actual portrayal of the human body. The humanlike vessels even further intensify such symbolic potency as they encompass storage as

a practice and anthropomorphism or hybridism as visual categories.

The consideration of these notions brings the discussion back to the initial question on the direction of personification or objectification, *i.e.* were the vessels personified or were individuals objectified? Therefore, the symbolic component of these visual and semiotic principles plays the major role in the explanation of anthropomorphic vessels and their features. If the storage is understood not only as a useful practice and if miniaturism and the depiction of the human body are considered in relation to their identification with the vessel, then few plausible explanations can be offered. Firstly, it should be noted that anthropomorphic vessels are not frequently produced, at least not in Neolithic Macedonia (Naumov 2011). Consequently, the visual and semiotic interaction between the human body (or an individual) and vessels was a significant process and addresses the importance of this object.

Whoever was represented on a container modified into body significantly had an effect on the perception and function of the item which was mainly used for accumulation of food. Thus, it could be proposed that the major semiotic focus was directed from the human towards the vessel, *i.e.* pottery was primarily personified in order to gain an anthropomorphic character or features of particular body parts (head, buttocks, arms etc.). These components were engaged to symbolically strengthen the accumulative and protective features of a particular vessel and to intensify its humanlike mechanisms. They could be further identified with a certain individual or being and incorporate its bodily features, character or identity. Such human-oriented anthropomorphism is common for various past and recent societies and initially intends to establish the personification of something which could be more easily understood through a human image, personhood and actions (Njegovanović-Ristić 1982; Braithwaite 1984; Feest and Kann 1992; Naumov 2013a). The ancient classical myths involving anthropomorphic metamorphosis of winds and rocks, and current children cartoons with humanlike animals actually employ the same semiotic mechanism that aims to explain natural phenomena or mousses with the appearance and practice as that of people.

Surely, such human-oriented symbolic mechanisms should not be overgeneralised and applied to all anthropomorphic vessels. In some cases, it could be absolutely the opposite direction of embodiment. Sometimes the commemoration of particular individuals is objectified, such as the representation of Christ as a vessel, fountain or cross (Dimitrova 2007; Naumov 2013a). A similar symbolic and visual

context could be integrated in the Neolithic, and certain community members could be identified with vessels or with an occupation associated with those that regard pottery. It is very likely that anthropomorphic vessels were used as devices of remembrance and as agents to establish engaged relationships with distinct individuals, ancestors or deities. That way they could be presented and exposed or even involved in interactions such as feasts, rituals or the accumulation of food. Nevertheless, the two seemingly opposite directions of symbolic personification and objectification could be intertwined as well and function as single semiotic entity. But even in that case it remains unclear who was integrated into such a complex symbolic process and why they were selected to be represented if the scarcity of anthropomorphic vessels in Macedonia is regarded. In order to understand such a specific notion of anthropomorphism it is necessary to encompass the visual features of these vessels with the corporeality common for Neolithic communities.

Corporeality of vessels in conclusion

The vessels themselves comprise corporeality. As it was elaborated above, the pottery is visually associative and its outline resembles the human body, therefore it is identified with body parts even when it is described among archaeologists. Most likely the same visual association was comprehended in the Neolithic, *i.e.* the period when pottery was initially produced in the Balkans and raised particular symbolic interest. It was a new product transformed from clay into pottery and therefore regarded as symbolic. Archaeological studies indicate that pottery temper and fabric in the earliest phases were much better than in the subsequent phases when it slightly decreased (Vitteli 1989). Such a consideration of Neolithic pottery was most probably manifest on its corporeal features and symbolically identified with the human body. In regard to this associative visual relationship anthropomorphic vessels were introduced a bit later in the Early Neolithic. In the course of time they gained a much-intensified semiotic potency due to the qualitative features of both body and vessel, *i.e.* to contain, and were introduced in a more complex imagery and symbolic processes.

As a result of such peculiarity, anthropomorphic vessels held a specific status and were not frequently produced. Surely, the production of these items required more time and knowledge compared to other vessels and therefore they were rarely manufactured, which synchronously had an effect on their character as prestigious products. Therefore, they were regarded as more

individual than most of the pottery and consequently were identified with particular individuals. The idea of individuality and personhood was already common among the first farming societies (Fowler 2004), so this notion was integrated as well within items that represented a person. They were materialised individuals that comprised more complex symbolic features related to a represented person or concerned a more generalised semiotic character. Some even interacted with the idea of gender as it was apparently manifest on the anthropomorphic vessel from Tarinci depicting a female with large buttocks. The notion of gender was a powerful social mechanism among prehistoric societies (Joyce 2000; Meskell 2001), thus it was particularly accented on objects associated with the human body. The gender on these items could be related to certain individuals or could concern a more general understanding of womanhood in the Neolithic. Apparently, the female gender was more accented on anthropomorphic representations in the Balkans (Becker 2010; Mina 2014; Naumov 2015), which also concerns humanlike vessels with pubic triangles, breasts or large buttocks. It remains to be discussed for the majority of other human representations and anthropomorphic vessels in particular which do not resemble any sex nor depict a feature in regard to it. Sexless representations and a third gender were thoroughly observed for prehistoric societies (Hollimon 1997; Meskell 2001), but it should be further studied if such notions could be applied to farming communities and their material culture in the 6th millennium BC.

Nevertheless, the exterior of anthropomorphic vessels exposes the corporeality determined as a Neolithic principle. Although rarely produced in Macedonia these items comprised only few standards of representations concerning three main categories: completely depicted bodies, the representation of only a lower body half and vessels modelled as a head. If Bourdieu's idea on habitus is considered (1990), then the standardised production of anthropomorphic vessels apparently manifests the modes of being human in the Neolithic. Surely, there are a number of individual features on many such vessels, but they all deal with only few body postures without any variety of gestures. In this direction, Mauss's elaboration on body techniques or Butler's performative bodies which significantly consider the body as an entity of socialised corporeality can be better employed (Mauss 1979; Butler 1993). Regarding anthropomorphic vessels in Macedonia they could be a manifestation of performative body techniques in relation to social standards and messages embodied through these objects. Some are obviously without limbs,

but some feature legs (even three of them) or hands and palms placed on the abdomen (Naumov 2011). Anyway, they endorse formalised gesticulation and communicate through determined visual principles concerning faces, limbs and even decoration on their bodies. Therefore, they expose the standardised corporeality which could be a manifestation of body techniques established as social norms in relation to the symbolic components incorporated with it.

The corporeality comprised within anthropomorphic vessels is apparently similar to the one embodied in other ceramic human depictions among Neolithic communities in Macedonia. The enlarged buttocks or hands on the abdomen and waists are frequently present on the figurines and anthropomorphic house models (Naumov 2009), so they could be determined as some of the most general features in regard to body techniques or preferred appearance. Without further explanations of this social component it should be asserted that anthropomorphic vessels are much rarer than other human representations that contain these features, a ratio which should be considered for their further understanding. Even if case studies and statistics are considered, it is evident that anthropomorphic vessels are scarce in relation to figurines and humanlike models unearthed at particular sites. For example, at Govrlevo there are 13 figurines, approximately 163 humanlike house models and only three fragments that could be identified as anthropomorphic vessels (Naumov 2015), numbers that apparently describe the production ratio of human representations (Fig. 3.6). The quantity of anthropomorphic vessels is even less at the neighbouring site of Zelenikovo with quite opposite values of figurines versus humanlike house models (Naumov 2014). The ratio on other Neolithic sites is more or less similar, with variations and alternations in regard to the quantity of figurines and anthropomorphic house models. Anyway, the number of vessels that depict human bodies is always lowest.

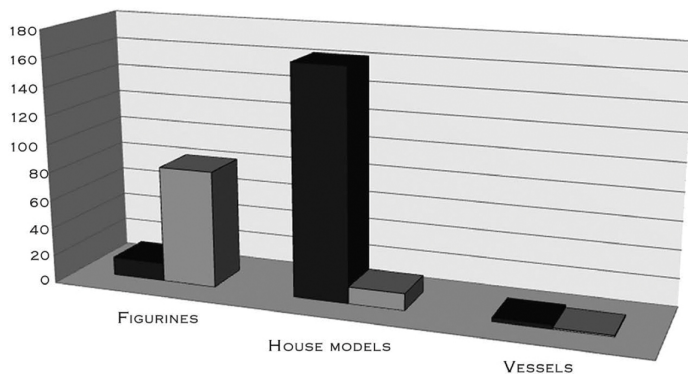


Figure 3.6: Ratio of anthropomorphic representations in Govrlevo and Zelenikovo.

Consequently, the question appears why there is this scarcity of anthropomorphic vessels in relation to other human representations in Neolithic Macedonia? One of the first answers that could be offered is their complex production, but there is more skill required for the manufacture of humanlike house models, and they are incomparably more frequent. Most likely other aspects of anthropomorphism should be considered in order to explain such a specific ‘scarcity’ of anthropomorphic vessels. As it was elaborated above, the vessels themselves contain more associative corporeality than any other Neolithic product made of clay. This is further confirmed by the intentional modification of some vessels for infant burials and their identification with regenerative organs (Nemeskéri and Lengyel 1976; Naumov 2013b). Such a ritual anthropomorphisation of vessels further asserts their semiotic components and indicates that vessels in general could be identified with the body even when they do not bear human features. Nevertheless, this probability should be discussed in the future in order to determine the range of symbolic varieties concerning pottery and their visual potency which is exceptionally accented on the anthropomorphic vessels and implemented as Neolithic corporeality.

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¹There are frequent discussions on breasts as gender indicators. Many consider breasts as a female feature, but there are also some researchers who interpret the representation of breasts also as male attributes (Bailey 2005; Mesckell *et al.* 2008). Regarding the Neolithic human representations in Macedonia, the majority of breast applications is associated with female figurines and anthropomorphic models, but there is no single male representation with this feature (Naumov 2009; 2014).

Chapter 4

Face vessels and anthropomorphic representations on vessels from Neolithic Italy

Valeska Becker

Introduction

The landscape in the European Neolithic is riddled with cultural phenomena whose borders are mostly defined by their pottery. They create a complex pattern, and the relationships between them are a constant source for research and discussion. In this meshwork, Italy poses a special difficulty for many central European researchers as far as its cultural relationships within in the country and with the surrounding cultures of southeast Europe and southern France are concerned. This might be due to the complex cultural relations between the Neolithic and the Copper Age in Italy itself and its neighbours but also to the abundant but sometimes difficult to obtain publications on the matter, and last not least language problems. Nonetheless, Italy's geographic position turns it into an important link between southeast and southwest Europe.

The aim of this paper is not to discuss connections between the Neolithic pottery of Italy and its neighbours, which has been done every now and then (e.g. Guilaine 1998; van Willigen 2006). Rather, I would like to focus not on pottery but on expressions of religion and systems of belief which may also function as bonds between cultural phenomena and markers of identity: face vessels and vessels with anthropomorphic depictions.

Overview of cultural phenomena (Fig. 4.1)

In order to understand the objects' cultural background, a quick overview of the early Neolithic cultural phenomena will be presented

in the following. As we know from ice cores, dendrochronological data and deep-sea cores, a cold and wet phase with unfavourable conditions for agriculture took place around the year 6200 cal. BC (Gronenborn 2005). It is only after this event that the first Neolithic settlers can be noted in Italy.

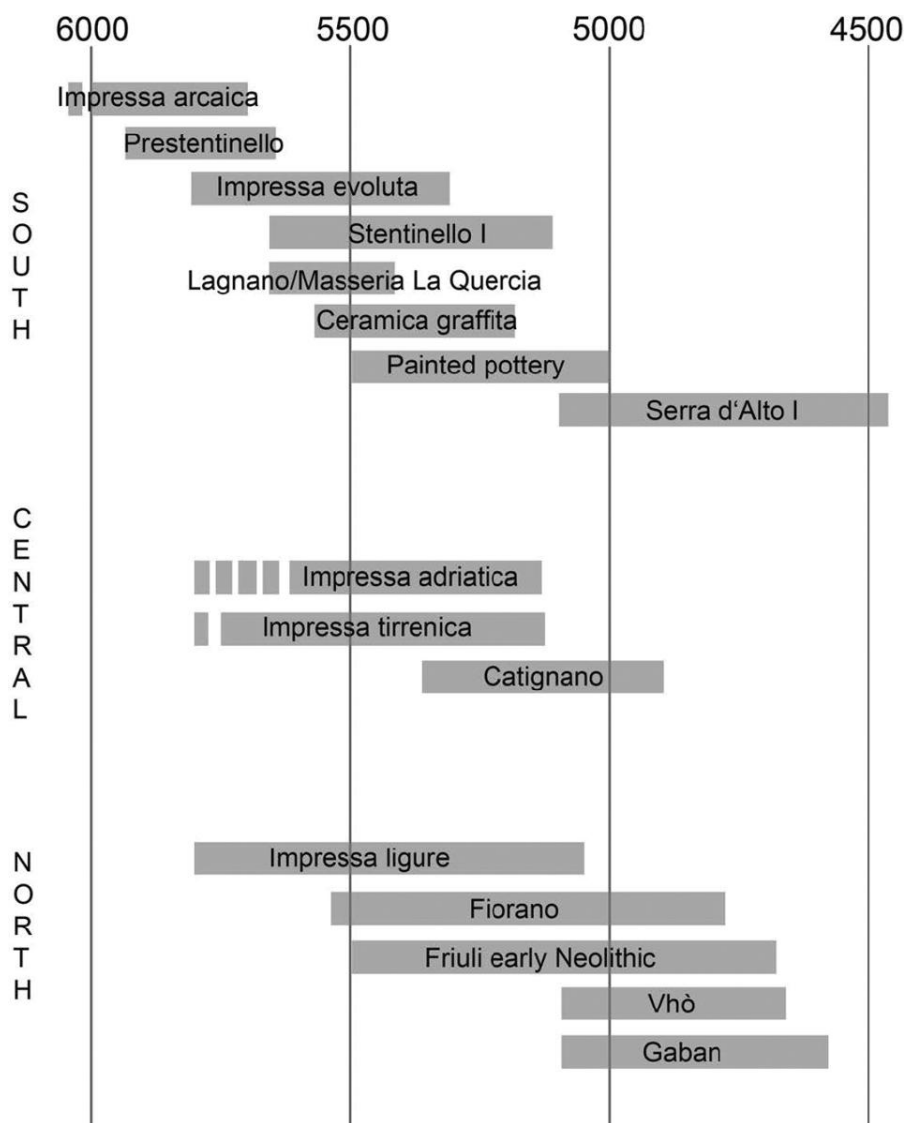


Figure 4.1: Overview of some of the cultural phenomena in Neolithic Italy (simplified after Pessina and Tiné 2008: 39 fig. 1).

The oldest Neolithic remains in Italy can be attributed to the Impresso culture. They occur in the regions of Sicily, Apulia, Calabria and Basilicata, in an area comprising parts of the Gargano peninsula, the Tavoliere, and Murgia (Pessina and Tiné 2008: 37–43). In caves

and open-air sites often surrounded by large ditch-systems, with houses encircled again by smaller ditches, people produced pottery decorated with imprints made with shells, finger nails, flint blades, or bone tools.

In the past, a stylistic development for the Impresso decoration has been elaborated (cf. for the following Tiné 2002). Archaic Impresso pottery (*ceramica impressa arcaica*) features a decoration spread over the whole vessel surface and comprises shapes like bowls, flasks, jars, and large storage vessels. In a younger phase (*ceramica impressa evoluta/fase Guadone-Rendina II*), new shapes are introduced, e.g. barrel-shaped vessels, jugs, and carinated vessels. The decoration is starting to be more organized, and elements such as bands, rhombs, trapezes, hanging triangles and, rarely, anthropomorphic representations occur. Finally, the first painted pottery develops even while Impresso pottery of the Guadone style is still being produced. This development, called *Lagnano – Masseria La Quercia*, features brown-painted vessels like flasks with a high neck, carinated and simple bowls with geometric patterns like triangles, zig-zag lines, and rhombs.

Although stylistically, a general development between these phases is discernible, absolute data show that they overlap in large parts when considered as a whole (Tiné 2002: 143–53). Changes probably occurred at different times at each site.

In the course of time, painted pottery continues to be used, and quickly, various different styles develop, such as white- and red-painted pottery and finally trichrome pottery with black elements. In other regions of south Italy, pottery decorated with very fine incised lines, so-called *ceramica graffita*, develops. Again, these two developments overlap largely and denote mainly regional trends. Finally, the *Serra d'Alto* group evolves as a supraregional phenomenon, featuring cups, flasks, bowls and jars with a very fine and elaborate painted decoration (Pessina and Tiné 2008: 43–46.).

In Sicily, a regional group of Impresso pottery can be found, called *Stentinello* group. Recently, an even older development was found and therefore called *pre-Stentinello*. The pottery of this group displays a somewhat different decoration than the Impresso of the Italian peninsula, with zig-zag imprints of sea shells and very early incised decoration (Pessina and Tiné 2008: 46–47).

Between 6000 and 5900, the Impresso culture spread along the west coast of Italy to the north, until it reached the Ligurian caves such as famous Arene Candide, around 5900 cal. BC. Oddly enough, up to now no early Neolithic remains are known in Campania and south

Lazio. This might be due to the strong tectonic activity in this area; Neolithic sites may be buried under volcanic ashes. It is noteworthy that around 7062–6776 cal. BC, Mount Vesuvius erupted – the so-called Mercato eruption, which covered the country under half a metre of ashes in a diameter of 30 km and more – and stayed active for some hundred years (Aulinas *et al.* 2008; Mele *et al.* 2011). Maybe post-eruptive events and aftershocks prompted the Neolithic settlers to avoid this region.

Impresso pottery can also be found in settlements along the Adriatic. However, ¹⁴C dates are much younger in these regions, and those from the northernmost Impresso settlements at the Adriatic point to the time around 5400–5200 cal. BC (e.g. Rosini, Sarti and Silvestrini 2005: 234–35). On the other hand, the *Catignano culture*, named after the eponymous site in Central Italy, features painted pottery that may be influenced by south Italian pottery styles (Bagnone and Zamagni 2003).

In northern Italy, Impresso pottery occurs only in terms of imports. Rather, an alternative cultural background may be assumed for the material remains that can be encountered here. The *Fiorano culture* in the Po Plain and the southern foothills of the Alps, in Tuscany and at the northern margins of the Apennine mountains, the Friuli early Neolithic and many small regional groups such as *Vhò*, *Gaban*, and *Isolino* seem to draw their cultural background from different sources. For a long time, influences from the Balkans early Neolithic or even the Linear Pottery Culture into northern Italy have been discussed (Pessina 1998: 101–02). This is due to the fact that the early Neolithic settlers in northern Italy left a completely different material culture: Their pottery shapes are flasks, carinated cups with handles (*tazze*), partly very flat bowls, and a distinctive fondness for handles. The decoration is incised rather than impressed or painted, and motives feature complicated arrangements of triangles, garlands and grain-shaped imprints (Pessina and Tiné 2008: 92).

Face vessels

Some, but not all of the cultural phenomena described above feature finds that may be associated with the sphere of rites and religion. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations can be found throughout Italy, and even though the various pottery styles allow a very finely defined subdivision for the Neolithic, these non-standard items display a larger theme that spans the small units merely defined by pottery. Especially anthropomorphic vessels can be used to highlight such connections. As it was defined elsewhere (Schwarzberg

2011: 15; Becker 2011: 109), we can subdivide anthropomorphic vessels into different categories whose labels differ among researchers:

- Face figurines respectively figural vessels, meaning hollow anthropomorphic representations
- Face vessels
- Face lids
- Footed vessels

Not all of these categories can be found in Italy. Only face vessels and footed vessels have been found until today, whereas figural vessels displaying the human body in its entirety are unknown.

I will confine myself in the following to the face vessels. The find conditions for this category are unfavourable since the vessels' hollow body makes them very vulnerable. Up to today, around 70 specimens were found that can be dated to the early Neolithic in Italy. Their original number, however, was certainly much higher. They can be analysed according to the shape of the vessel, facial features and the existence of certain, maybe symbolic signs.

Basically, three different ways of creating a face on a vessel can be distinguished. For one, there are vessels where the face is placed plainly on the surface on the vessel (Fig. 4.2.1–8); for another, there are vessels where the face is separated from the vessel's body by a clay band; and finally, there are vessels where the whole face is modelled separately and then placed onto the vessel like an application (Fig. 4.2.9–11). Sometimes, such applicated faces look like knobs or lugs and might in fact have been used as such.

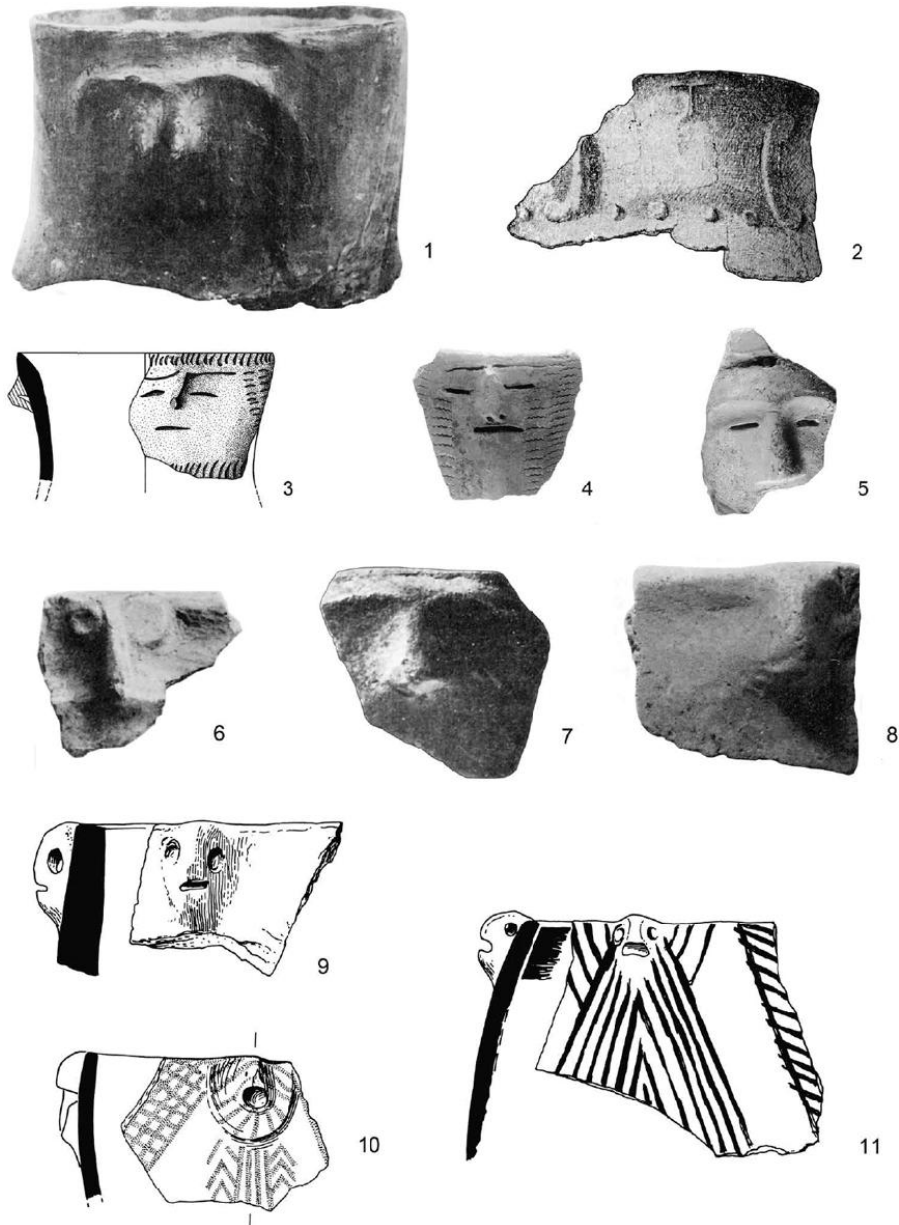


Figure 4.2: Face vessels. 1. Grotta Scaloria; 2. Murgia Timone; 3. Rendina; 4. Madonna delle Grazie – San Lorenzo; 5. Grotta di S. Croce; 6. Spadavecchia; 7. Cala Tramontana; 8. Torre Canne; 9–11. Masseria La Quercia. Different scales (after Graziosi 1973: 109, fig. a; Ridola 1926: 150, fig. 12; Cipolloni Sampò 1982: 274, fig. 64; Fiorentino, Muntoni and Radina 2000: 397, fig. 8; Coppola 1981: 269, fig. 5.10; Mayer 1904: pl. 3.21; Coppola 2001: 112, fig. 19.13; Jones 1987: 158, fig. 94.b–d).

Vessel shape

The vessel shape is an important feature as far as the interpretation of face vessels is concerned. Although the original content of Neolithic

vessels remains unknown in many cases, some vessel forms and sizes can be attributed to certain functions. For example, large coarse thick-walled containers are usually thought to have held supplies such as cereals or pulse, whereas thin-walled, more delicate vessels are rather associated with eating and drinking. However, anthropomorphic features can be recognized on very different vessel shapes. In Neolithic Italy, faces can be found on flasks (e.g. Grotta Scaloria: Graziosi 1973: 109, fig. a; Murgia Timone: Ridola 1926: 150, fig. 12; Catignano: Bagnone and Zamagni 2003: 139, fig. 75.5), bowls (e.g. Capo Alfieri: Morter 1992: 150, fig. 7, 153), cylindrical and “storage” vessels (e.g. Masseria La Quercia: Jones 1987: 158, fig. 94.a–d). Very often, however, the original shape of the vessel cannot be reconstructed since preservation conditions are unfavourable for such artefacts. Still it is very interesting that so many different vessel shapes were used, even vessels whose body does not resemble a human body, such as bowls. At the moment, it seems that elaborately worked faces occur more frequently on flasks which evoke similarities to the human body regarding their shape, whereas “simpler” faces consisting mainly of knob- or lug-like noses are found also on bowls and jars. Maybe these two vessel groups, assembled together because both are adorned with anthropomorphic faces, had very different meanings.

About two-thirds of the face vessels feature eyes which are indicated by impressions, circles, clay applications, incised or painted horizontal lines (Fig. 4.2). Sometimes, there are eyebrows. The nose was made from a longish or drop-shaped clay band. The mouth seems to have been kind of important, since it is expressed on every other face vessel. It might have been rendered as an impression or a horizontal incised line.

The distribution of the face vessels in Neolithic Italy is clearly confined to the south. Here, at sites of younger Impresso pottery but mainly with incised and painted pottery, so-called *ceramica graffita* or *ceramica dipinta*, face vessels occur quite often. They are also common in the Stentinello group, therefore existing in Sicily as well. The northernmost sites featuring face vessels are Colle Santo Stefano (Radi 2002: 514) and Catignano (Bagnone and Zamagni 2003: 139, fig. 75.5) in the region Abruzzo.

It is possible to discern regionally different developments concerning the representation of the face, particularly the eyes, of the face vessels. This is true for the face vessels from the Stentinello group on Sicily. Whereas the face vessels on the Italian peninsula usually have horizontal painted or incised eyes, the Stentinello group face vessels render the eyes in a very particular way: the eyes are depicted

by rhombs or concentric circles with very long eyelashes (cf. Scarcella 2011: 217–18). This feature can, up to now, only be found in Neolithic Sicily.

Chronology

The age determination and especially the cultural respectively stylistic attribution of the finds is fairly difficult. Some pieces originate from old excavations, for others, no stratigraphic context exists. At present, the oldest vessel with an anthropomorphic representation on it was found at Baselice (Langella 2012), dating to the oldest phase of the Impresso culture, and there is a ^{14}C date for the structure the vessel comes from: 5969–5636 cal. BC. However, it is not really a face vessel *sensu strictu*. Rather, the vessel displays an anthropomorphic application including the head with an open mouth (or maybe female genitalia) and widely spread arms. If not for those, the head very much resembles the knob- or lug-like anthropomorphic face vessels mentioned above.

Apart from the vessel from Baselice dating to the archaic phase of the Impresso pottery, a large group can be dated to the *ceramica impressa evoluta* (Guadone: Tinè/Bernabò Brea 1980: 60, fig. 8f; Setteponti: Bianco 2002; Torre Canne: Coppola 1981: 265, 269, fig. 5.10; Torre Sabea: Coppola 2001: 107, fig. 18.7, 108) and the painted or scratched pottery of the south Italian Neolithic (Foggia-Villa Comunale: Simone 1982, 139, fig. 5.15, 143, 144, fig. 7.15; Masseria La Quercia: Jones 1987: 158, fig. 94a; Monte Aquilone: Manfredini 1972; Passo di Corvo: Tinè 1983: 98–99, pl. 132, 722; Rendina: Cipolloni Sampò 1982: 270, fig. 60, 274, fig. 64, 278, 283, fig. 72; Tirlecchia: Coppola 2001: 106, 107, fig. 18.6.24, 109–110, 112, fig. 19.1.6; Cave Mastrodonato: Coppola 2001: 106, 107, fig. 18.1; Murgia Timone: Lo Porto 1978: 284, fig. 8; Capanna Longo: Coppola 2001: 111, 112, fig. 19.5; Grotta delle Veneri: Coppola 2001: 110, 112, fig. 19.3–4; Terragne: Coppola 2001: 107, fig. 18.25, 109; Lama Marangia: Geniola 1974: 85, fig. 20.1; Francavilla Fontana: Biancofiore 1953, 225, 227, figs 6.8, 6.11). Two vessels from Cala Tramontana can be attributed to this group since they were found associated with painted pottery from the Scaloria Alta style (Palma di Cesnola 1967: 376, 377, figs 9.2–3).

With two sites, face vessels occur roughly at the same time in Central Italy. One fragmented face vessel was found at Catignano (Bagnone and Zamagni 2003: 132–133, 139, fig. 75.5, pl. XII.b), associated with painted pottery named after the very same site. Some face vessels of the lug-type occurred at Colle Santo Stefano (Radi

2002: 514) and can be dated to the Adriatic Impresso pottery.

Finally, the youngest face vessels considered here can be attributed to the *Serra d'Alto* group of south Italy. Examples were found at Serra d'Alto itself (Coppola 2001: 107, fig. 18.4, 108), Grotta no. 3 di Latronico (Cremonesi 1978: 186, 187, [fig. 4.1](#)), Masseria Cesario (Gorgoglione, Laviano and Rugge 2013: 163, [fig. 3.5](#), 164), and Grotta Carlo Cosma (Gorgoglione, Laviano and Rugge 2013: 160, 161, [fig. 1.2](#)).

In terms of absolute chronology, the beginning of the face vessel phenomenon in Neolithic Italy can be dated to the years around 5600/5500 cal. BC, and they continue to be used until the end of the 6th/the middle of the 5th millennium cal. BC.

From these, we can draw two conclusions: (1) Face vessels start to occur in larger numbers only in a phase when the Neolithic way of life has fully established itself and settlements start to thrive and expand; and (2) they are very much restricted to the south of Italy, with only very few exceptions in central Italy and, until today, no such finds from northern Italy. With this, they seem to be tied to the early Impresso pottery and its later stylistic developments as well as the Stentinello group, omitting, however, the Ligurian and Tyrrhenian Impresso on the one hand and all northern Italian Neolithic cultural phenomena such as *Fiorano*, *Vhò* and others.

Signs and symbols: far-reaching communication (Figs 4.3–4.4)

Due to the fragmentary state of many face vessels, it would be difficult to analyse the vessel decoration to see whether face vessels differed from regular vessels regarding motives and styles. However, the faces themselves offer the opportunity to assess them with respect to their decoration. About 50% of all faces feature only expectable traits such as eyes, eyebrows, noses, and mouths. The other half additionally displays decoration located underneath the nose or mouth. In accordance with the respective cultural background, this decoration may be painted or incised. In all, six groups of motives can be identified:

1. Triangles, incised or painted, underneath the mouth or, if no mouth is depicted, underneath the nose: cf. vessels from Catignano (Bagnone and Zamagni 2003: 132–133, 139, fig. 75.5, pl. XII.b), Masseria Cesario (Gorgoglione, Laviano and Rugge 2013: 163, [fig. 3.5](#), 164), Grotta Carlo Cosma (Gorgoglione, Laviano and Rugge 2013: 160, 161, [fig. 1.2](#)), Fondo Spadavecchia (Mayer 1904: pl.

- III.18), and Grotta dei Cervi (Gorgoglione, Laviano and Rugge 2013: 161, [fig. 1.3](#)).
2. Vertical bands filled with parallel, diagonal or gridwork lines: *cf.* vessels from Cimino (Gorgoglione 2002: 799, top), Torre delle Monache (Coppola 2001: 107, [fig. 18.21](#), 109), Masseria La Quercia (Jones 1987: 158, [fig. 94.b](#)), Monte Aquilone (Manfredini 1972: 99, [fig. 4](#), fourth row in the middle), and Capanna Longo (Coppola 2001: 111, 112, [fig. 19.5](#)).
3. Triangular plastic bands: *cf.* vessels from Cave Mastrodonato (Coppola 2001: 106, 107, [fig. 18.1](#)), Baselice (Langella 2012), Cimino (Gorgoglione 2002: 799, centre), Serra d'Alto (Coppola 2001: 107, [fig. 18.4](#), 108), Torre delle Monache (Coppola 2001: 106, 107, [fig. 18.2](#)), Grotta dei Pipistrelli (Coppola 2001: 106, 107, [fig. 18.5](#)), Masseria Casone (Coppola 2001: 109, 107, [fig. 18.19](#)), and Rendina (Cipolloni Sampò 1982, 270, [fig. 60](#) bottom, upside down, 278).
4. Triangular incised bands filled with parallel or perpendicular lines: *cf.* vessels from Grotta delle Veneri (Coppola 2001: 110, 112, [fig. 19.3–4](#)), Lama Marangia (Geniola 1974: 85, [fig. 20.1](#)), and Serra d'Alto (Ridola 1926: 150, [fig. 13](#)).
5. Chevrons, open to the top or bottom: *cf.* vessels from Masseria La Quercia (Jones 1987: 158, [fig. 94.b–d](#)), and Monteverde (Coppola 2001: 107, [fig. 18.19–20](#), 110).
6. Diagonal parallel lines: *cf.* the vessel from Cala Tramontana (Palma di Cesnola 1967: 376, 377, [fig. 9.3](#)).

Triangles (motive 1) seem to play an important role for they constitute part of almost all motives. Their position is intriguing. Since they occur both underneath mouth and nose, it is difficult to pinpoint their actual meaning, and in fact it is unclear whether they symbolise a bodily feature such as a beard or the chin dimple or whether they encode a meaning that is lost to us. However, the application of a sign or symbol in connection with a human face can be found on face vessels from other geographic regions as well. As it was recently put forward by H. Schwarzberg, M-shaped decorations under human faces on vessels can be found around the upper Tisza area and the Danube bend and, with some examples, also in Germany and even in Greece during 5450–4850 cal. BC; they have predecessors in southeast Europe (Schwarzberg 2011: 125, [Karte 22](#), and 132–33). Another probable symbolic sign looking like an u or a U is distributed in central Germany and along the river Main, as well as in Hungary around the Danube bend, without any finds in between (Schwarzberg 2007: 126, [Karte 23](#), and 133). Sexual characteristic, symbol for a group identity,

mask, animal horns, beard, or chin – the meaning of these signs is still debated.

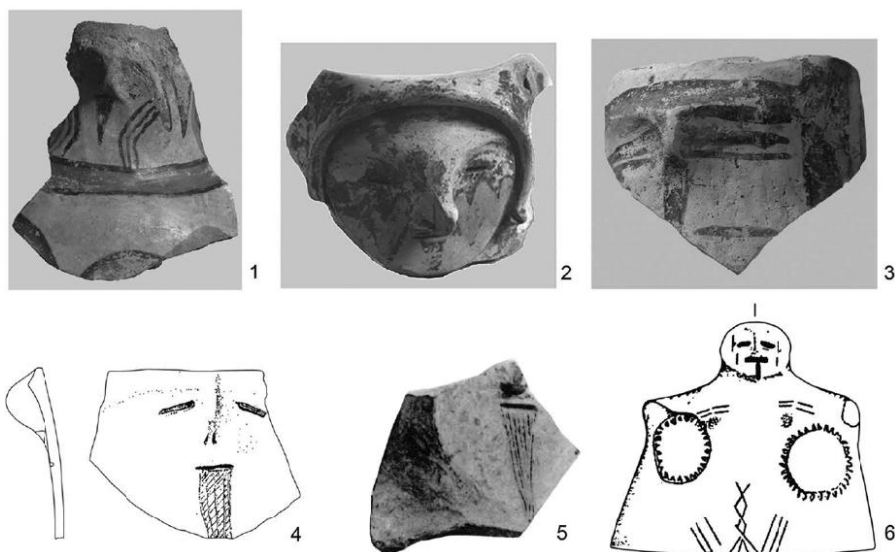
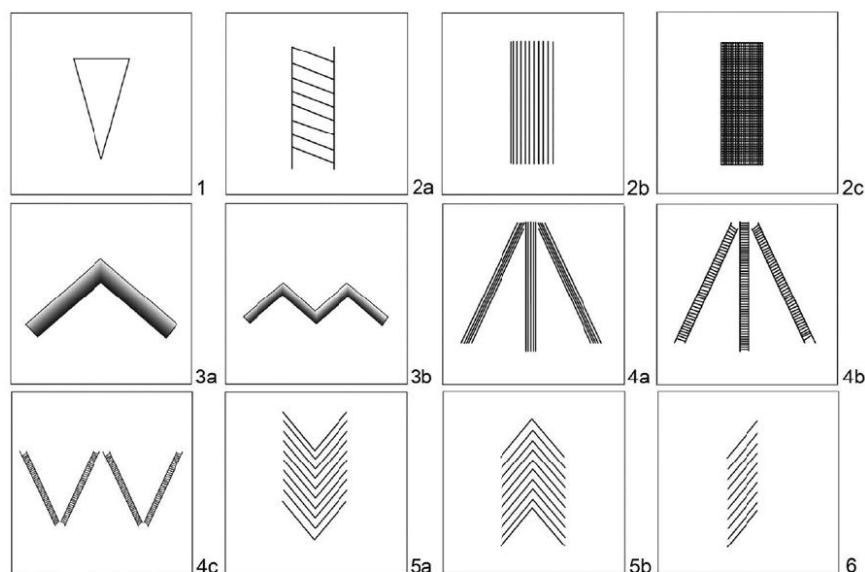


Figure 4.3: Decoration underneath the mouth or nose in Neolithic Italy. Top: motives. Bottom: Vessels and figurine featuring a triangular motive underneath the nose or mouth. 1. Grotta Carlo Cosma; 2. Porto Badisco; 3. Masseria Cesario; 4. Catignano; 5. Spadavecchia; 6. Canne. Different scales (after Gorgoglione, Laviano and Rugge 2013: 161, [fig. 1.2–3](#) and 163, [fig. 3.5](#); Mayer 1904: pl. III.18; Bagnone and Zamagni 2003: 139, fig. 75.5; Fugazzola Delpino and Tiné 2002/03: 31, fig. 11).

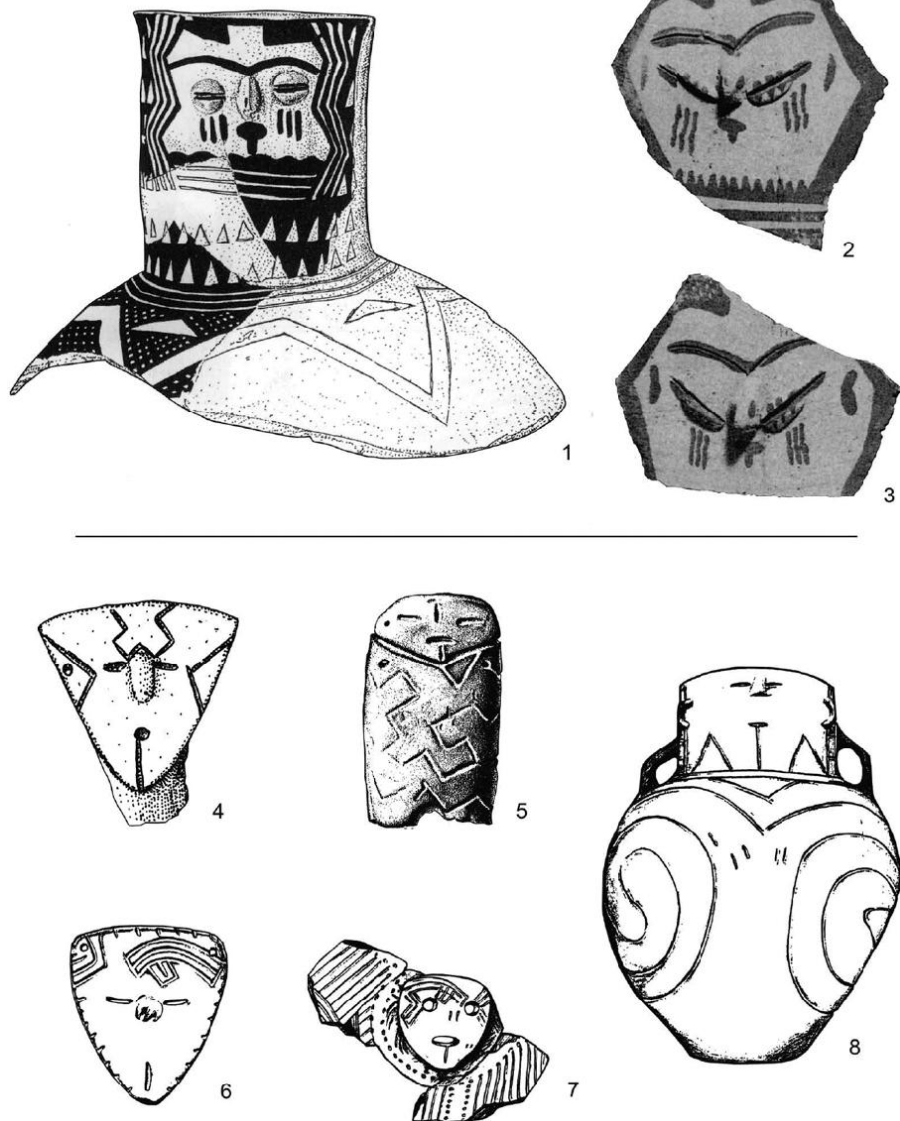


Figure 4.4: Vessels with a vertical line underneath the mouth from the Near East (top) and the Eastern Linear Pottery Culture (bottom). 1. Hassuna; 2–3. Tell es-Sawwan; 4, 6. Füzesabony; 5. Surroundings of Körösladány; 7. Sajószentpéter; 8. Gyoma. Different scales (after Schwarzberg 2011: Taf. 66–67; Becker 2011: 855 Taf. 170.1, Taf. 172.2, Taf. 177.1 and Taf. 182.9, 182.11).

In Neolithic Italy, there are no parallels for M- or U-shaped decorations. But oddly enough, parallels to the signs underneath the nose or mouth described above can be found outside of Italy. T-, Y- or II-shaped symbolic elements were a part of face vessels even from the 7th millennium cal. BC on in the Near East. Examples from Hassuna and Tell es-Sawwan in the Near East (Fig. 4.4.1–3) have coffee-bean

eyes and a rich painted decoration, including sometimes a vertical line drawn underneath the mouth (Lloyd and Safar 1945: 122–24, [fig. 1.2](#); Abu al-Soof 1968: pl. 13). A direct parallel is unlikely due to the long chronological and geographical gaps between Iraq and south Italy. But it is remarkable that this motive also becomes very common in the time around 5500–4800 cal. BC in the upper Tisza region ([Fig. 4.4.4–8](#)). Here, many face vessels and also figurines belonging to the eastern Linear Pottery Culture feature such a vertical line underneath the mouth. It should be noted that there is also one figurine from Neolithic Italy (Canne: Fugazzola Delpino and Tiné 2002/2003: 30–31, [fig. 10](#)) with a hollow body and that very same symbol underneath the mouth.

The similarity between the Neolithic face vessels from Italy and the Tisza region with respect to such a particular decoration is remarkable. The long distance between these two regions makes it hard to believe that direct connections existed: Between south Italy and the Tisza region, it is around 750 km as the crow flies, assumed that the Neolithic settlers were able to navigate the Adriatic, and over 1000 km over land. Other connections between these regions have never been discussed. It is interesting that the developed phase of the eastern Linear Pottery Culture (AVK II) and the regional groups of Szakálhát and Esztár-Pişcolt (Kalicz and Makkay 1977; Strobel 1997) both feature the use of paint in pottery decoration, which is uncommon for other Neolithic phenomena of the time in southeast or central Europe but again common in Neolithic Italy. Yet this is only a weak link between these distant regions, and much more research would be necessary to firmly establish connections. It is also possible that this special motive had a common origin and developed independently, but similarly. The following find category will further outline connections between the Italian and the central and southeast European early Neolithic.

Anthropomorphic representations on vessels

Another group of anthropomorphic depictions is represented by incised, painted or impressed figures on vessels. They were put together in 2001 by D. Coppola, and since then, only very few new finds of this category have come to light; in all, 48 representations are known today. Their original number must have been much higher, but they are difficult to identify on fragmented vessels.

Vessel shapes

Most vessels featuring anthropomorphic representations are badly

fragmented. Thus, there is no knowing what they originally looked like. Some vessels are, however, preserved, and as it is true for the face vessels discussed above, anthropomorphic incised or painted representations can be found not only on one single category or vessel shape, but rather occur on bowls, flasks and storage jars alike. Mostly, they appear on the vessels' outer wall, but sometimes, especially on bowls, also on the inside. Again, this seems to indicate that anthropomorphic representations cannot be connected to a certain content.

Motives (Fig. 4.5–4.6)

Up to now no real typology of this kind of representation exists, and with only 48 examples, it would be difficult anyway to establish different types (Samari: Coppola 2001: 102, fig. 16.23, 103; Grotta della Trinità: Coppola 2001: 102, fig. 16.25, 104; Grotta delle Veneri: Coppola 2001: 103, 105, fig. 17.8; Grotta Sacara: Coppola 2001: 104, 105, fig. 17.1; Le Fiette: Coppola 2001: 102, fig. 16.11, 16.19, 103–104; Masseria Campanella: Coppola 2001: 102, fig. 16.2, 103; Scamuso: Biancofiore and Coppola 1997: 124, 125, 127, pl. XI.14, XI.15, XI.20, pl. XII.18; Vito-Scaramella: Guilaine 1985: 513, [fig. 4.1](#); Lagnano da Piede: Mallory 1989: 236, fig. 30.5–7; Monte Aquilone: Manfredoni 1972: 96, 115, fig. 45.6; Masseria Villana: Coppola 2002: 102, fig. 16.14, 103; Masseria La Quercia: Jones 1987: 154–55, figs 87, 88a, 158, fig. 93c, 93f; Passo di Corvo: Tinè 1983: pls 63.24, 110.551; Navarino: Coppola 2001: 103, 105, fig. 17.4; Lama Marangia: Geniola 1974: 85, fig. 20.2, 20.4–7; Grotta di Santa Candida: Coppola 1980: 37, fig. 11; Sant'Anna: Coppola 2001: 104, 105, fig. 17.14; Monte Fellone: Coppola 2001: 104, 105, fig. 17.11; Grotta Sant'Angelo: Coppola 2001: 101, 84, [fig. 9.1](#); Serra d'Alto: Tinè 1978: 44, 45, fig. 3 and Coppola 2001: 102, fig. 16.24, 103; Rendina: Cipolloni Sampò 1982: 256, fig. 48.2, 257, fig. 49, 259, 263, fig. 54.4, 54.8, 281, fig. 70.1–2, 288, fig. 75.8, 75.12; Olivento di Lavello: Cipolloni Sampò 1987: 700, [fig. 2.1–2](#), 702; Catignano: Bagnone and Zamagni 2003: 124, fig. 67.2, 133; Sammardenchia: Ferrari and Pessina 2012: 176, [fig. 1.6](#), 178, 180; Gazzo Veronese-Scolo Gelmina: Salzani and Salzani 2006: 496, 498, [fig. 3.5](#); Lugo di Grezzana: Moser 2000: 127, [fig. 1.3](#), 128, 132; Fiorano Modenese: Pessina 1998: 99, fig. 5; S. Calogero: Tinè, Tinè and Trasverso 1994: 255, fig. 1). Basically, one can differentiate between representations featuring more details such as a rhombic, triangular or circular head, a body made up of angles, triangles, fishbone or cross motives and sometimes even fingers or toes; and on the other hand, there are very stylized

representations without a head and looking more or less like a stickman. In both cases, however, these representations display a similar posture, with arms spread up- or downward as in prayer and spread legs.

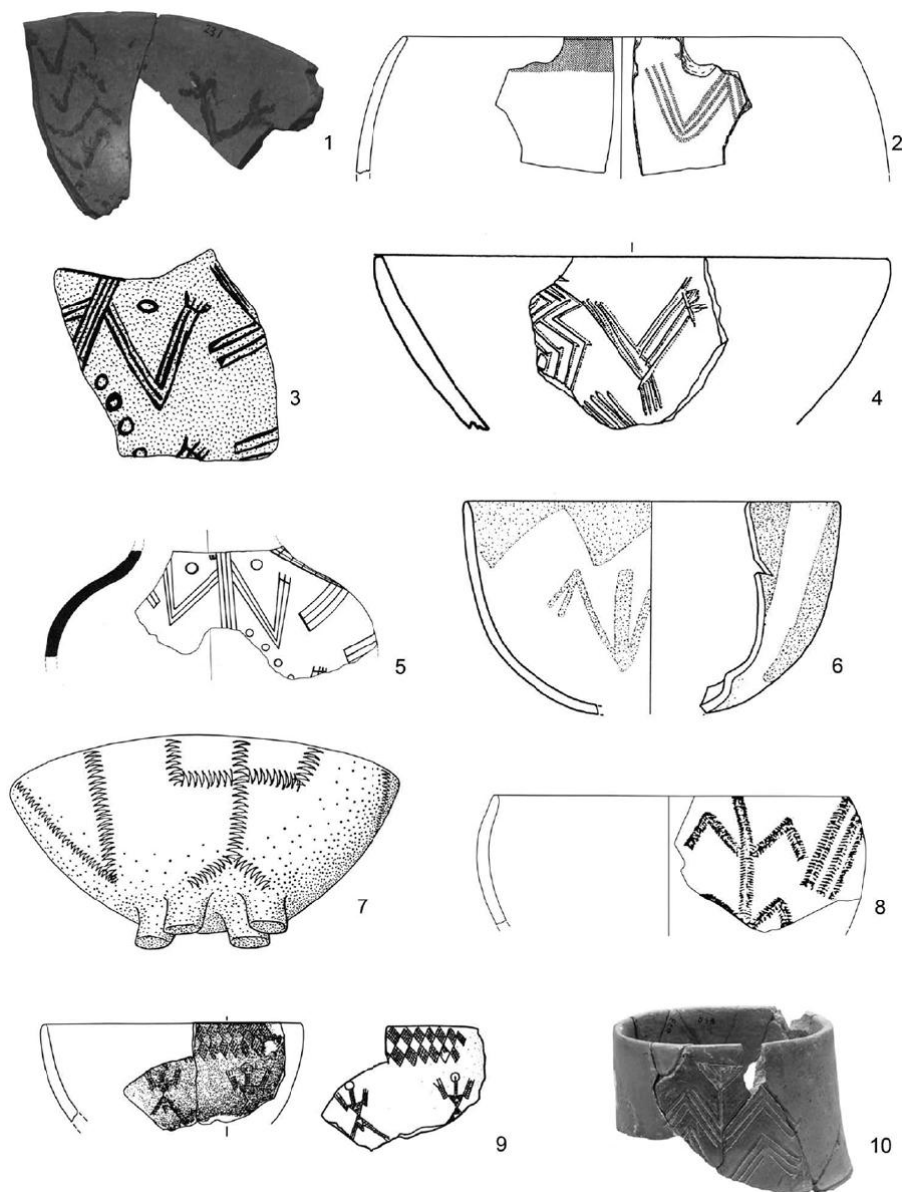


Figure 4.5: Vessels with incised anthropomorphic representations. 1. Lagnano da Piede; 2. Masseria La Quercia; 3. S. Vito-Scaramella; 4. Olivento di Lavella; 5. Passo di Corvo; 6. Catignano; 7. Masseria Villana; 8. Rendina; 9. Grotta di Santa Candida; 10. Grotta S. Calogero, Monte Kronio. Different scales (after Tinè 1983: pl. XII.4 and pl. 63.24 (46); Jones 1987: 155, fig. 88.a; Guilaine 1985: 513, [fig. 4.1](#); Cipolloni Sampò 1987: 700, [fig. 2.1](#); Bagnone and Zamagni 2003: 124, fig. 67.2; Coppola 2001: 102, fig. 16.14 and 105, fig. 17.9; Cipolloni Sampò 1982: 257, fig. 49; Coppola 1980: 37, fig. 11).

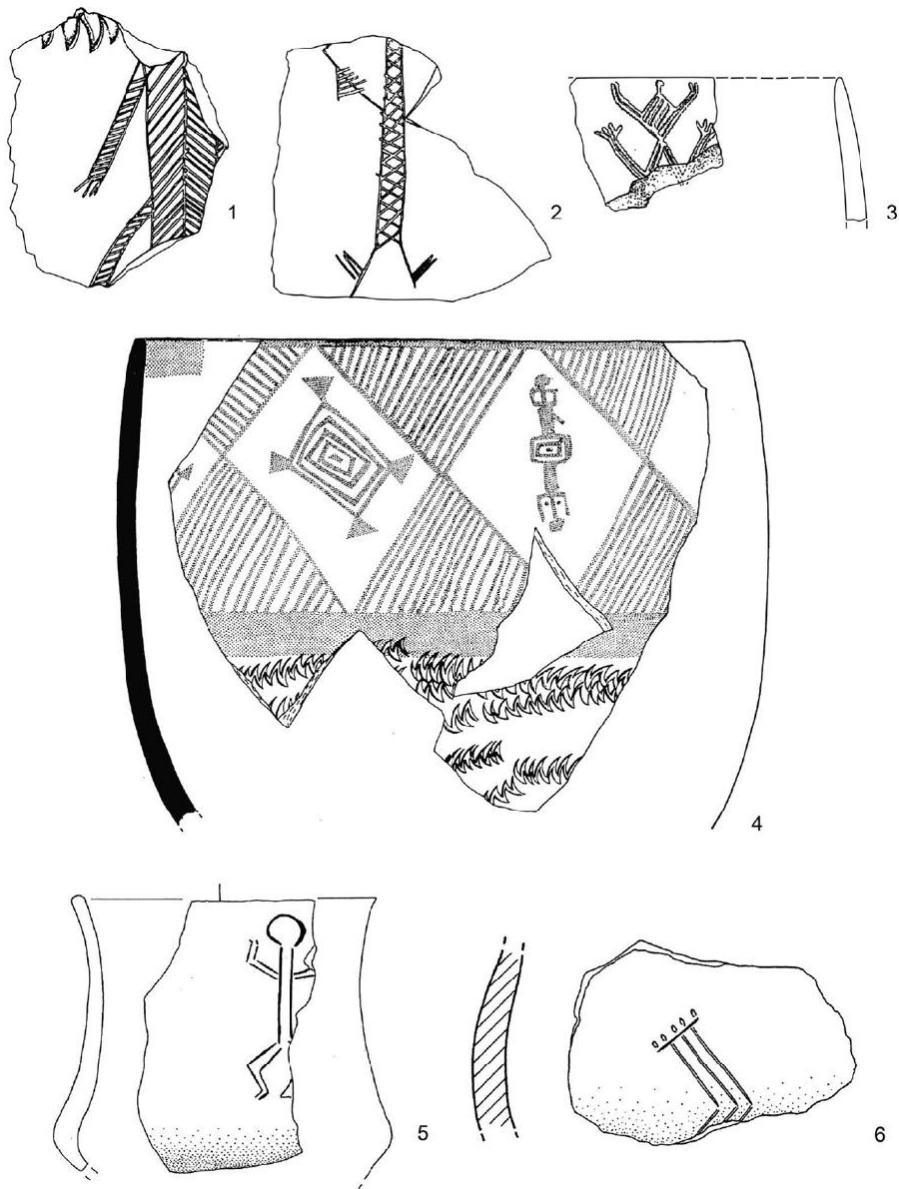


Figure 4.6: Vessels with incised anthropomorphic representations. 1–3. Lama Marangia; 4. Masseria La Quercia; 5. Sammardenchia; 6. Gazzo Veronese. Different scales (after Geniola 1974: 85, fig. 20.2, 20.6–7; Jones 1987: 154, fig. 87; Ferrari and Pessina 2012: 176, [fig. 1.6](#); Salzani and Salzani 2006: 498, [fig. 3.5](#)).

The motif in itself can be traced back as far as Göbekli Tepe, where a woman with spread legs was engraved on a floor tile of the so-called “lion-pillar building” (Hauptmann and Schmidt 2007: 73). However, in the sites of the PPN and the early Neolithic in Anatolia, also animals were depicted in this way, for example on the famous clay seal of Çatal Höyük with a spread-legged animal, maybe a bear

(Türkcan 2007); or reliefs on the pillars of Göbekli Tepe and wall plasters of Catal Höyük (Cutting 2007; Öztan 2007).

It has often been suggested that this posture supposedly symbolises a woman giving birth, which might be the case for the representation from Göbekli Tepe. But it is doubtful if this explanation is true for all such representations. If we take a look at the depictions from Neolithic Italy with respect to the rendering of gender and sexual characteristics, we can see that it is hardly ever possible to determine the sex of the depicted figure. Only very rarely, male and female representations can be presumed, for example on a large jar from Masseria La Quercia (Jones 1987: 154, fig. 87), where two anthropomorphic painted representations were drawn one above the other, the top one very likely being a male and the bottom one a female. A male might also be represented on the outside of a bowl from Grotta di Santa Candida (Coppola 1980: 37, fig. 11), where a figurine with an upside-down triangle between the legs can be found.

Distribution

Very similarly to the distribution of face vessels in Italy, anthropomorphic representations can be mostly found in the south of the country, with one site on Sicily and large clusters in Puglia. One example from Catignano (Bagnone and Zamagni 2003: 124, fig. 67.2, 133) testifies their existence also in the Abruzzi, but otherwise, central Italy is completely void of them. With another four representations from northern Italy, they now occur in a region where face vessels were never manufactured (Sammardenchia: Ferrari and Pessina 2012: 176, [fig. 1.6](#), 178, 180; Gazzo Veronese-Scolo Gelmina: Salzani and Salzani 2006: 496, 498, fig. 3,5; Lugo di Grezzana: Moser 2000: 127, [fig. 1.3](#), 128, 132; Fiorano Modenese: Pessina 1998: 99, fig. 5).

Besides Anatolia and Italy, anthropomorphic representations of this kind appear as applications in southeast Europe ([Fig. 4.7.1–5](#)), in the Karanovo I and II cultures and in the west Bulgarian early Neolithic, also as painted representations. As applications, they are also known in the Starcevo-Körös-Criş cultural complex, although they do not appear in the Impresso culture along the coasts of the east Adriatic. With the beginning of the Vinča culture, this type of representation ceases to exist in southeast Europe.

However, incised anthropomorphic representations can now be found in the Linear Pottery Culture ([Fig. 4.7.6–9](#)). Indeed, the Linear and Stroked Pottery Cultures yield the best parallels for the incised, impressed and painted anthropomorphic representations of south Italy. This is true for the posture of the representations as well as for

their position on the inside and outside of vessels.

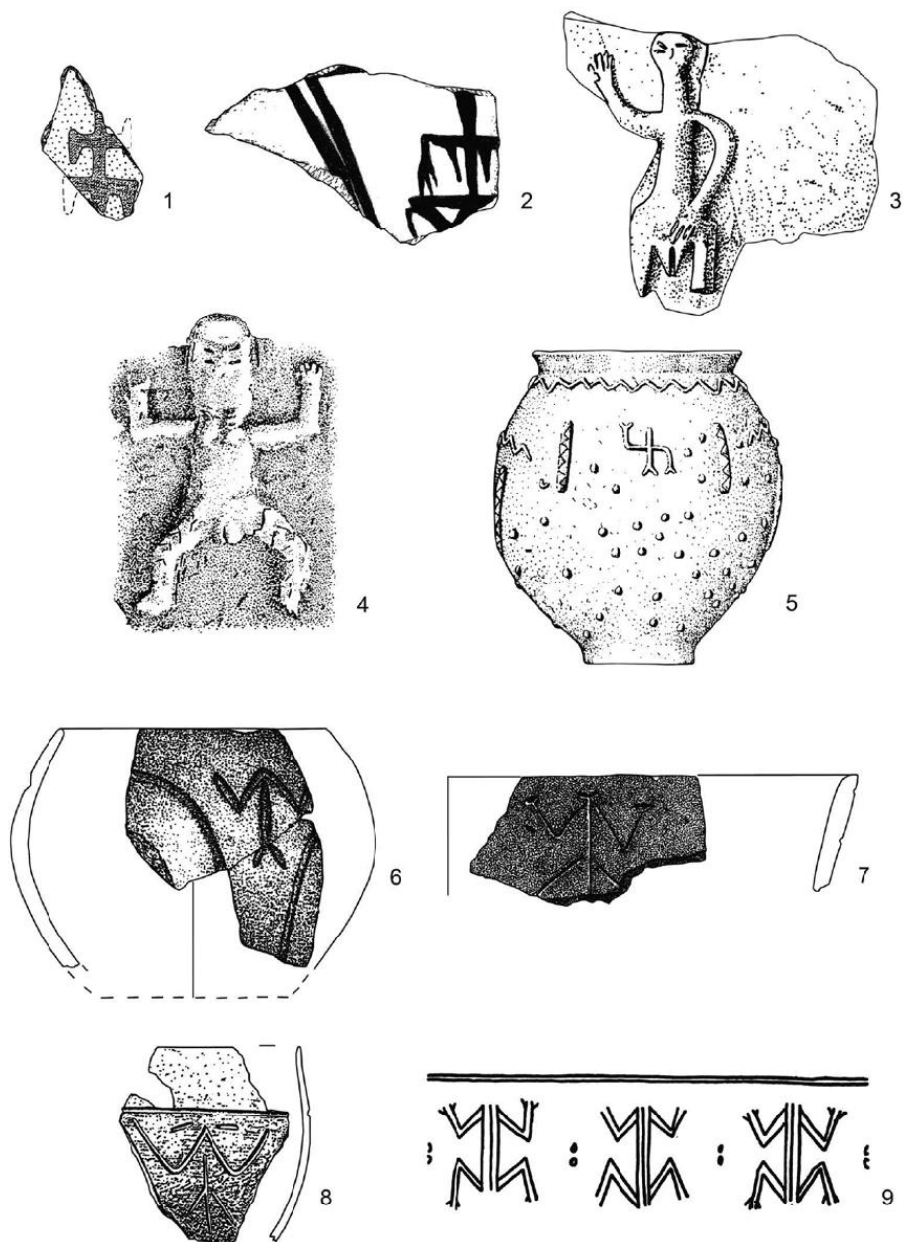


Figure 4.7: Parallels to the Italian incised anthropomorphic representations from the Balkans (1–5) and the Linear Pottery Culture (6–9). 1–2. Sofia-Slatina; 3. Čavdar; 4. Sarvaš; 5. Szajol-Felsőföld; 6. Petrivente; 7. Mórág; 8. Kustánszeg; 9. Praha-Bubeneč. Different scales (after Becker 2009: 79, Abb. 14).

These similarities are striking, but it is doubtful whether such a comparison is legitimate, since there are about 650 km as the crow flies between the southernmost representation of the Linear Pottery

Culture and the northernmost of the south Italian depictions. However, we must keep in mind the Fiorano culture with its curious vessel designs that may indicate its role as a possible link between Neolithic Italy and the Linear Pottery Culture.

Conclusion

In many ways, Italy is unique as far as the characteristics of the early Neolithic settlers' material remains are concerned. Vessel shapes and motives, decoration techniques, but also settlement structures and mortuary rites are very specific and difficult to parallelize with neighbouring Neolithic cultural phenomena.

The analysis above, however, yielded elements that can be used to connect rather than to separate. Face vessels, especially those with a sign underneath the mouth or nose, find close parallels to examples from the eastern Linear Pottery Culture, and although we have yet to find an explanation for this phenomenon, the similarities are striking. They become all the more intriguing when we remember that these objects are an integral part of the Italian Impresso culture but do not occur in the eastern Adriatic Impresso (Müller 1994) which is both geographically and culturally closer.

Either, these parallels can be attributed to far-reaching networks, maybe fuelled by an exchange of certain raw materials such as spondylus, flint or other, perishable goods. In such a case, they may point to common sets of religious belief. Or they are the result of a shared origin and developed similar, yet independently. It may be worthwhile to further analyse material remains of these distant regions comprehensively in order to pinpoint other parallels.

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Chapter 5

The vase, the body: Between filial relationship and original complex

Johanna Recchia-Quiniou

“Truth is elevated to symbol at the flap of a wing.”
Emile Zola to his friend H. Céard, 22nd March 1885

In the northwestern Mediterranean during the Neolithic, we find the presence of vases that put the human form on display. Despite the fact that the phenomenon emerges as early as the Early Neolithic and continues to be expressed during the entire Neolithic period and extends beyond it to never really stop, theoretically, it seems not to concern all chronocultural areas. The presence of these objects in the Neolithic material culture has only rarely been addressed in this region of Europe. Their scarcity and sporadic appearance do, indeed, greatly limit any attempts to provide a synthesis on the subject. Numerous questions do, however, arise, which will be developed here, in order to propose as complete an overview as possible of this category of objects and their underlying issues.

The first questions are of the methodological sort. How must one approach the study of this type of vase? Are classical typological studies, based on the morphology of vessels and their decorations, appropriate for the analysis of this type of container? Reducing the study of these vases to simple chronocultural and typomorphological analyses does not provide information on the semantic content of these anthropomorphic vases. Indeed, at once a practical object, an aesthetic as well as a symbolic one, begging to be admired, the polymorphism of these vases, pushes their domestic function to the background. Although, in general, pottery fully participates in the construction of cultural identities, for the category under study it is also at the heart of issues concerning the representation of the body, and therefore at the heart of issues concerning the representation of

society as a whole.

It also seems necessary to add an anthropological (in the social sense of the term) thought process to the classical typological studies, drawing from the current resources provided by ethnographic investigations or the mythological tales used to recount a people's genesis. This foray into current pottery practices, notably in Africa in particular, will spur a line of questioning about the ostentatious or discreet aspects of the anthropomorphic nature of the pottery. This is why it is fundamental to steer the study of these vases beyond the usual typomorphological analyses, which are, above all, descriptive, and to attempt a more anthropo-archaeological reading of these pots.

Moreover, we must also consider this phenomenon not as a purely northwestern Mediterranean manifestation appearing out of nowhere, but as having been born out of the more general context of the first pottery productions of the Near East, as well as those of the Balkans and central Europe. We will, thus, attempt to understand, on the one hand, those characteristics in our corpus that stem from a relationship with, or descend from, the European or Near Eastern substrate, and, on the other hand, those that are a unique expression of the human form found in the productions in our sphere of study.

Finally, this line of thinking will encourage us to examine how these vessels produce meaning on a larger scale, and thus, how they are woven into the very process of neolithisation. In our opinion, these pots are simultaneously products and symptoms of what is commonly known as the Neolithic Revolution, a revolution that is as much economic (Childe 1958; Cartailhac 1889) as it is symbolic (Cauvin 1997).

Northwestern Mediterranean manifestations: Sporadic, discreet productions, but constant themes

In the introduction, we mentioned that the vases of our realm of study that display anthropomorphic attributes constitute a barely visible portion of all pottery productions. These vessels are, indeed, rare and come from a limited area of manifestation. The diversity of morphotypes and decorations is quite limited, and, from one chronocultural sphere to another, the same themes and shape and decoration associations are repeated, even where styles vary. The reoccurrence of these themes, therefore, constitutes a series of guiding principles that can be followed throughout the different Neolithic eras and in different locations. Instead of presenting this corpus by chronological eras or by chronocultural zones of manifestation, we propose a classification by theme.

The three major assemblages observed boil down to a body theme, a head or face theme and an organ theme, essentially represented by “matrix vases.” Additionally, the first two themes are complementary but only rarely coexist in the same chronocultural spheres. “Matrix vases” have rarely been investigated in our region of study and are reminiscent of practices better known in the Balkans (Naumov 2007) and the Levant (Bacvarov 2006: 102; Orelle 2008: 71–73).

Occasionally headless bodies ...

General points

The category of “(occasionally) headless bodies” is essentially illustrated by vases whose morphology and style intend to evoke, first and foremost, the torso. The body of the vase can be cylindrical, ovoidal, spherical or hemispherical, sometimes biconical and more rarely, tronconical. To this simple, geometrically shaped torso is added a neck, and sometimes, between neck and body, a shoulder. Depending on the cultural substrate, the base of the vessel can be either flat or concave. The composition of these shapes, therefore, evokes a rough outline of the upper part of a body. The decorations and handles define additional features, clarifying the nature of certain attributes, such as those often associated with clothing or a chest; the anthropomorphic nature of the vase may also be reinforced by the addition of schematic characters.

Early Neolithic productions: Impresso pottery and Cardial and Epicardial pottery

At “Setteponti” in the Basilicata region of southern Italy, a finely made vase found in a domestic context, can, in our opinion, be associated with this category of vessel. This vase has a neck atop a globular torso, embellished by two tunnel-shaped handles on only one side. The vase is trimmed with bands of impressions typical of Impresso productions (Fig. 5.1.1). This layout of neck/globular body/paired handles is a recurring theme in this vase category. The Valencian Cardial productions of Spain contain several examples belonging to this category, and in several cases, they are also adorned with schematic characters (Figs 5.1.2, 5.1.6–9). Such is the case at the sites of “Cova de l’Or” (Beniàres), “Cova de la Sarsa” (Bocairent), and “Castellón” (Costamar). By and large, the vases are globular, with the exception of two vessels with shoulders (Figs 5.1.5, 5.1.9), and are small – their diameters rarely exceed 5 cm – placing them in the category of miniature vases. On certain vases from “Cova de la Sarsa”

white inlays as well as traces of red coloring on the vase's inner walls have been observed (Cortell Pérez and García Borja 2007: 67).

The sites of “Cova de l’Or” and “Cova de la Sarsa” are cave sites exhibiting funerary practices whose chronology is not always clear. Additionally, questions arise about the presence of domestic areas and, therefore, the circumstances of these pots, namely whether they are associated with the funerary realm or the domestic one (Cortell Pérez and García Borja 2007: 67; García Borja *et al.* 2011: 176). Recent dating has been unable to confirm the presence of Early Neolithic burials at “Cova de l’Or,” which leaves the status of the pots uncertain. In contrast, the datings at “Cova de la Sarsa” confirm its funerary occupation during the Early Neolithic periods, but only one vase, theoretically non-anthropomorphic, is most definitely associated with a double burial (García Borja *et al.* 2011: 177–82).

Middle Neolithic productions: The Chassean and Cortaillod spheres

This theme extends into the Middle Neolithic, where it seems to emphasise breasts, while Early Neolithic vases move between representations of a rough body outline and imprinted decorations evoking hair or clothing, as well as schematic characters, occasionally adding handles in place of breasts. In Cortaillod style pottery productions the decorations are refined while the ostentatious nature of the chest places it at the centre of the depiction. These are moulded breasts, placed upon a globular body, topped by a neck (Figs 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.4, 5.2.7). In a more discreet way, echos of this same theme are also found in Cortaillod and Michelsberg style pottery productions. The vases in question are flat-bottomed pitchers, equipped with a handle and a neck, and the breasts depicted are reduced to the plastic application of two lugs (Figs 5.2.3, 5.2.5–6). Certain vases of early phases of the Burgundian Middle Neolithic (BMN), adorned with pairs of teats placed on the shoulder, are reminiscent of this gynaecomorphic theme (Moreau 2010: 459–60). The gynaecomorphic vases of the Cortaillod Culture are spread mostly across central Switzerland but are also found in southern Germany (Jammet-Reynal 2012: 92–93) and originate from domestic contexts. Despite the rarity of these vases, they seem to be incorporated into a larger production network of symbols that go beyond the Cortaillod Culture to also affect the Pfyn and the Michelsberg Cultures. Indeed, the establishment of this network, built around the representation of the female breasts, is made obvious by the presence of artefacts including, besides the gynaecomorphic vases, breasts moulded from wattle and daub, found in the destruction levels of houses at Thayngen-Weier and

at Mönchberg (Petrasch 1984; Schlichtherle 1998; Seidel 2010).

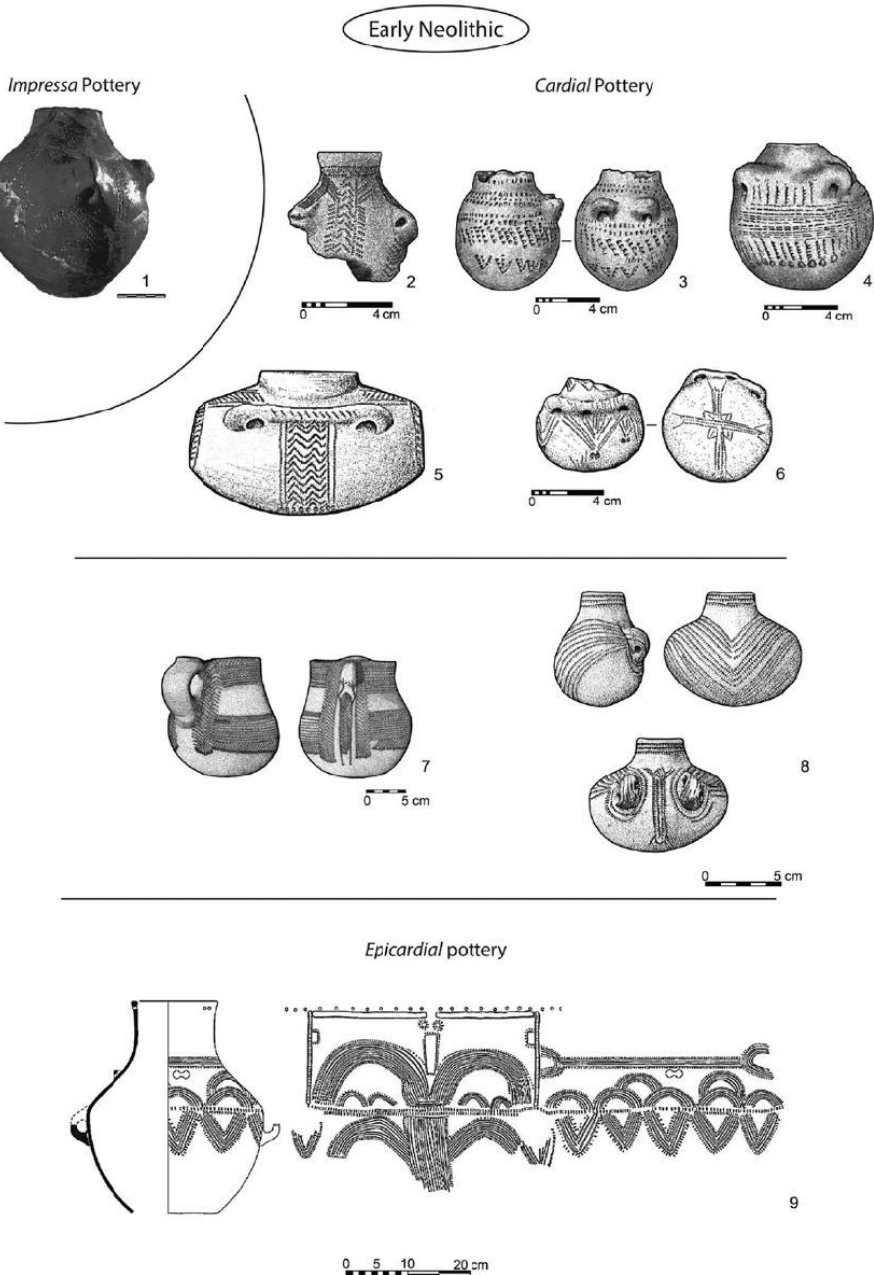


Figure 5.1: Ceramics from early Neolithic in Italy and Spain. 1. Impressa pottery, Setteponti, Matera, Italy (Bianco 2002); 2–8. Cardial Pottery: 2–6. Cova de la Sarsa, Bocairent, Spain (drawings of 2–4 by Angel Sanchez; Baldellou et al. 1989; Marti and Hernandez 1988); 7–8. Cova de l'Or, Beniares, Spain (Marti and Hernandez: 1988); 9. Epicardial Pottery, Castellon, Costamar, Spain (Flors Ureña and Danfeliu Lozano 2011).

The presence of anthropomorphic vases in the Chassean realm of

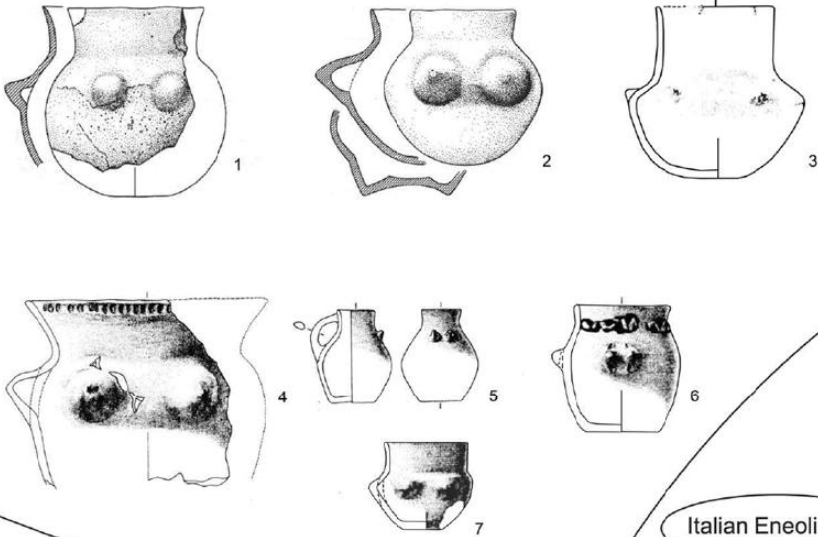
the Middle Neolithic in the south of France has already been cautiously examined (Vaquer 1975: 332), mainly due to the similarities between a stone stela from the site of “Castelluccio dei Sauri” in the Italian province of Foggia and the decorations on a carinated vase, adorned with a double handle and embellished with parallel, triple and semi-circular incisions, found in the “Grotte de Saint-Joseph” in the Gard in France (Fig. 5.2.8). The author is unsure whether this decoration evokes eyes or breasts and suggests that the resulting ambiguity may be intentional. Furthermore, the author admits that the comparison of the two artefacts is somewhat shaky, considering that the stela can most likely be attributed to the Bronze Age. Nevertheless, one must remember that anthropomorphic terracotta statuettes are well-documented in the Chassean realm (Vaquer 1975: 330–33; Blanchet 1990; Gascó and Gernigon 2002), as well as in the Catignano realm of the Italian Middle Neolithic. As a matter of fact, a terracotta statuette seems more comparable to the Chassean decoration of the vase (Fig. 5.2.9). Indeed, it incorporates two breasts encircled by painted bands (Colombo 2012: 169). It also seems probable, mainly because of the placement of the pair of handles on the lower carination, that this type of Chassean vase is more reminiscent of a gynaecomorphic theme than a face-related one.

From Switzerland to Italy: Some gynaecomorphic vases of the Italian Eneolithic

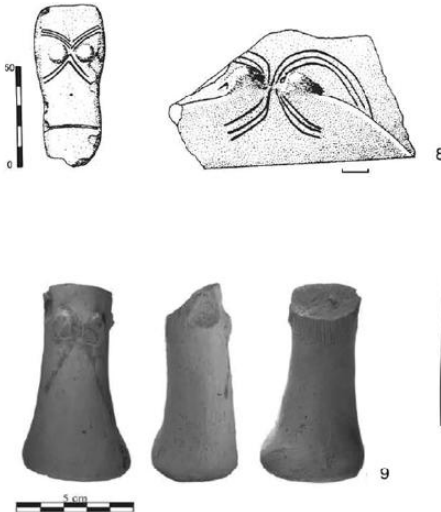
During the transition between the Middle Neolithic and the Late Neolithic (around 3500 BC), the theme of corporeality seems to peter out in favour of the emergence of productions that more specifically evoke the face and head. In the centre of Italy, however, a few rare gynaecomorphic productions remain and have been found in the Eneolithic necropolis of Rinaldone. There are two *fiasco* vases, each accompanying a deceased person in their tomb (tombs 2 and 4). Each has an ellipsoid body, adorned with two pairs of seemingly moulded breasts, situated opposite each other and topped by a straight thin neck (Dolfini 2004: 153–65) (Figs 5.2.10–11). Despite the temptation to assert a filiation between the gynaecomorphic vases of Cortaillod and those at the Rinaldone necropolis, the data is too sparse to take advantage of this line of reasoning, especially since the Cortaillod vases are incorporated into domestic contexts, while those from the Rinaldone necropolis come from funerary contexts.

Middle Neolithic

Cortaillod Pottery



Chassean Pottery



Italian Eneolithic

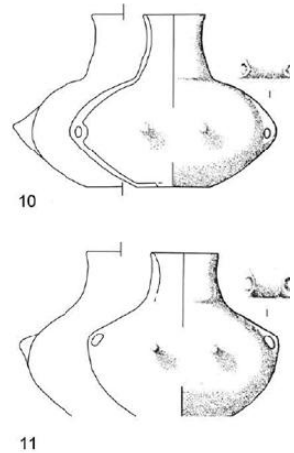


Figure 5.2: Gynaecomorphic pottery. 1–7 Cortaillod pottery. 1. Möriegen, Berne, Switzerland (Gallay 1977); 2. Saint-Aubin-Sauges, Neuchâtel, Switzerland (Gallay 1977); 3. Kleiner Hafner, Zurich Switzerland (Gallay et al. 1987); 4–7. Mozartstrasse, Zurich, Switzerland (Stöckli 2009); 8. Chassean pottery. Idol from Castelluccio dei Saur, Italy, and pottery from Grotte Saint-Joseph Sainte-Anastasia, France (Vaquer 1975); 9. Catignano Culture, idol from Catignano village in Italy (Colombo 2012); 10–11. Eneolithic pottery from Italy. Rinaldone, Montefiascone (Doflini 2004).

... And bodiless heads

General points

The category of “bodiless heads” is constituted of pots designed to represent the head or face. As far as morphotypes are concerned, this category is more limited, but, at the same time, certain original features can be found. Indeed, the head or face can be conjured entirely by the general shape of the pot. In such cases, the morphotypes are almost systematically of the spherical or semi-spherical types and can sometimes be classified as a segmented shape, the upper section of which is rectilinear. This type of vase is often embellished with hollow decoration and plastic applications that depict the nose and eyes, the mouth only rarely being alluded to. Furthermore, facial features can also be portrayed discreetly on handles, where the general shape of the vase no longer seems to play a role in their evocation.

Early Neolithic productions: Impresso pottery and Cardial and Epicardial pottery

In the archaeological literature on the Early Neolithic of southern Italy, several mentions are made of fine to semi-fine pottery, which is said to contain stylised faces depicted on ribbon handles, placed near the vase’s rim, such as that found at “Grotta Verde” in Sardinia (Moravetti 2006: 6–7) ([Fig. 5.3.1](#)). At “Setteponti” in the Basilicata region, a fragment of a more crudely manufactured vase was found, with an elongated quadrangular handle upon which bands of circular impressions were added, symbolising eyes (Bianco 2002: 689–91).

In line with traditions from the Early Neolithic, vases from the Catignano Culture contain a few painted schematic anthropomorphic depictions, sometimes on their inner wall, as well as hemispheric vases that evoke the face, seen particularly at the site of Catignano itself. It has not been possible to systematically reconstruct the vase shapes, but hemispheric forms are present and potsherds show eye-nose-mouth associations, where the nose is preferentially formed by a handle, with or without perforation, and where the eyes are either painted or incised (Colombo 2012: 169–70; [Figs 5.3.3–4](#)).

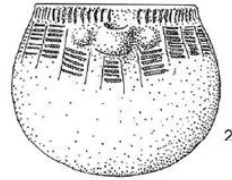
The site of “Grotte de l’Aigle” (Gard, France) provides the example of a vase whose general shape conforms to that of a sphere, which was decorated using a shell and incisions. Most interestingly, a vertically perforated, sausage-shaped handle is placed between two large knobs (Roudil and Soulier 1979: 78; [Fig. 5.3.2](#)). For now, no other examples of this type are known for this period.

Early Neolithic

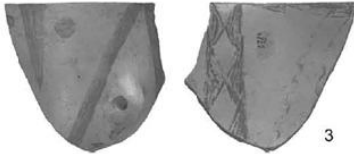
Cardial Pottery



Epicardial Pottery



Catignano Pottery

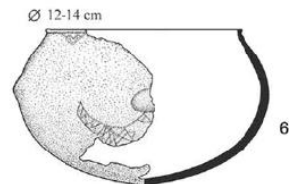


Middle Neolithic

Montbolo Pottery



Chassean Pottery



+ 200 %

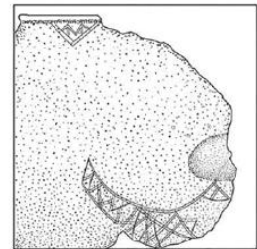
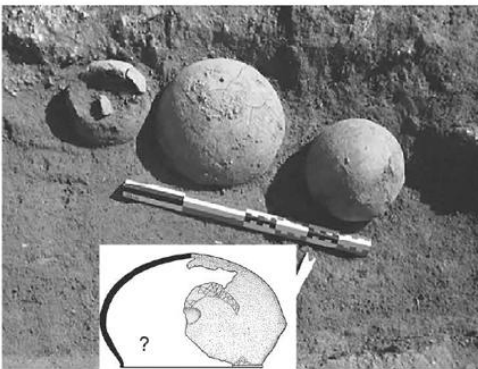


Figure 5.3: Face motives from the Early and Middle Neolithic. 1. Cardial pottery, Grotta Verde, Alghero, Sardinia (Moraveti 2006); 2. Epicardial pottery, Grotte de l'Aigle, Méjannes-le-Cap, France (Roudil and Soulier 1979); 3–4. Catignano pottery, Catignano, Ponte Rosso, Italy (Colombo 2012); 5. Montbolo pottery, Grotte de Belesta, Belesta, France (Treinen-Claustre 1991); 6–7. Chassean pottery, La Capoulière, Mauguio, France (drawings: L. Jallot, J. Recchia-Quiniou).

Middle Neolithic productions

Above, we evoked the ambiguity seen in the carinated Chassean vases adorned with a pair of handles. In the Middle Neolithic, in the Languedoc region, other types of vases in the same chronocultural sphere are known to bear similar anthropomorphic features. They can be attributed to the Montobolo and Chassey ceramic cultures. These “moustachioed,” or aciform vases can also be placed in the spheroid or hemispheroid, sometimes ellipsoid or hemi-ellipsoid morphotype categories. Such is the case at the “Grotte de Bélesta” (Pyrénées-Orientales, France) (Treinen-Claustre 1991: 40; [Fig. 5.3.5](#)), but also at the site of “Capoulière” (Mauguio, France) (Recchia-Quiniou: forthcoming; [Fig. 5.3.6](#)), where arches spread out towards the top or the bottom, on each side of a knob or lug. As for the “Capoulière” vase, it is interesting to consider the context of the vase’s discovery. It was found in situ, almost intact, in a pit, lying on its neck and accompanied by two typologically similar vases, also placed on their necks. Furthermore, during excavation, these vessels were at first mistaken to be skullcaps. Thus, one wonders from which angle these vases should be viewed. Should they be viewed while lying on their necks or on their bases ([Fig. 5.3.7](#))?

The faces of the Late Neolithic: From the Iberian Peninsula to the Languedocian realm

It is during the Late Neolithic that the occurrence of vases referring to heads and faces is most frequent. They can be very explicit, as is the case with the Los Millares ceramic culture, or more elusive, as is the case in Late Neolithic contexts on the Atlantic Coast and in the Languedoc region.

The Los Millares Culture vases are found in funerary contexts, and almost all correspond to a half-sphere shape. Their peculiarity is the depiction of two sun-shaped eyes, sometimes embellished with lashes or brows, earning them the title of “oculados” ([Figs 5.4.1–4](#)). Oddly enough, the Danish pottery of the Late Neolithic also shows the same type of decoration (Müller-Karpe 1978: 93), but it is very difficult to see a phylogenetic link between the two.

On the Atlantic Coast, Peu Richardien pottery contains many decorations featuring concentric circles. Discoveries of intact examples of this type of vase are infrequent, and it is difficult to determine the organisation of these motifs, making the allusion to eyes difficult to confirm ([Figs 5.4.5–14](#)).

We can, nevertheless, highlight the fact that a tendency towards decorations involving a series of circles or half-circles becomes widespread during the Late Neolithic in southwestern Europe, because

these motifs, split into different stylistic variants, are seen in numerous ceramic cultures of the Late Neolithic from southern Spain (Los Millares), the French Atlantic Coast (Peu Richardien pottery) and the Languedocian Coast in France (Ferrières and Fontbousse cultures; Figs 5.4.17–19).

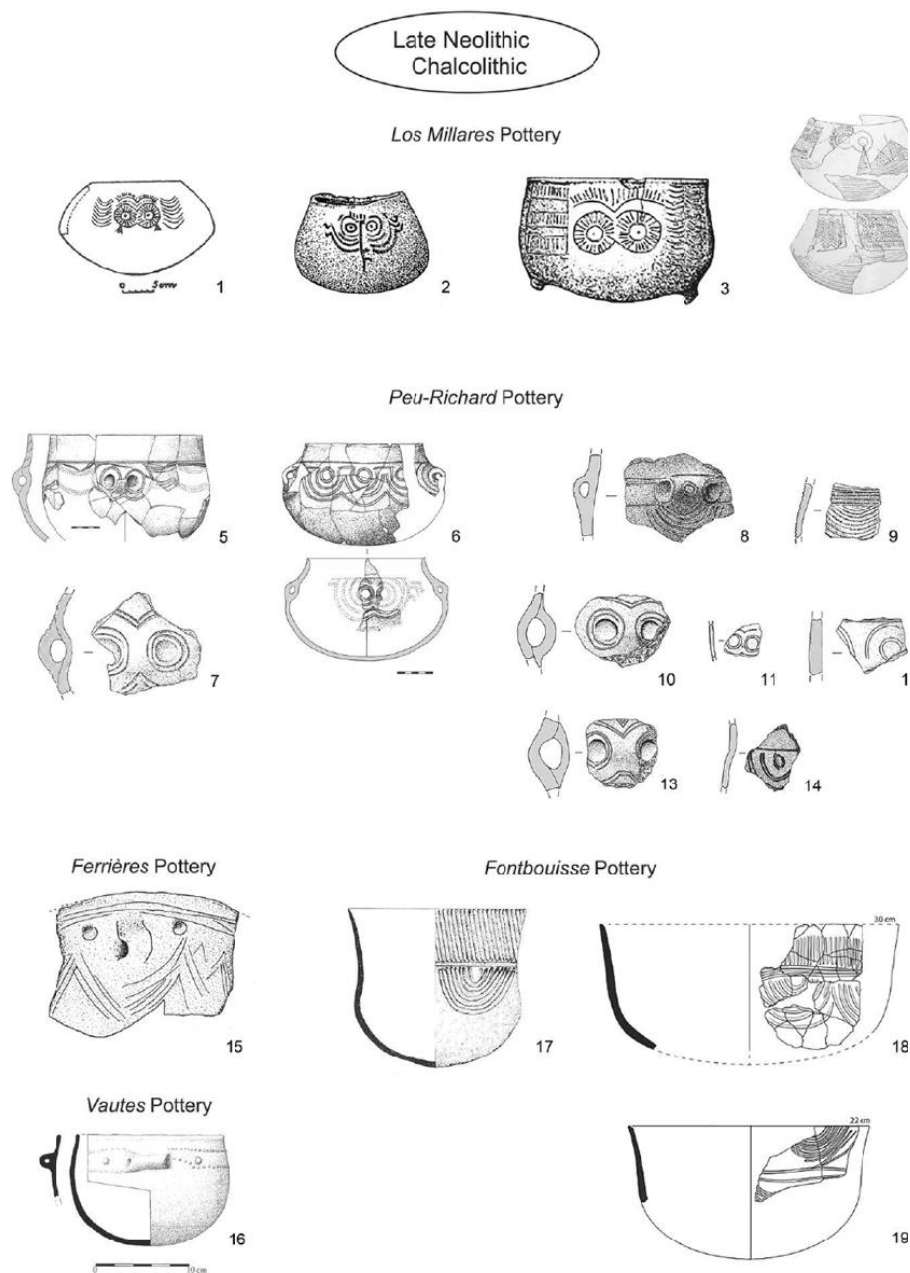


Figure 5.4: Face motives from the late Neolithic and Chalcolithic. 1–4. *Los Millares pottery*: 1. Almizaraque, Almería, Spain (Ballester Tormo 1946); 2–4. *Los Millares*, Santa Fe de Mondújar,

Spain (Müller-Karpe 1978; Martín Socas and Camalich Massieu 1982; Leisner and Leisner 1943). 5–14. *Peu-Richard pottery*: 5. *Le Rocher*, Villedoux, France; 6. *Diconche*, Saintes, France; 7. *Champ Durand*, Nieul-sur-l'Autise, France; 8–14. *La Sauzaie*, Soubize, France (Ard 2001). 15. *Ferrières pottery*: *Grotte des fées*, Tharaux, France (Arnal 1976). 16. *Vautes pottery*: *Les Vautes*, Saint-Gély-du-Fesc, France (Timsit and Escallon 2003). 17–19. *Fontbouisse pottery*: 17. *Grotte de l'hirondelle de Firoles*, Sainte-Anastasia, France (Guthertz 1975); 18–19, *La Capoulière*, Mauguio, France (Orgeval 2013).

Still other vases can be placed in this category. They include ceramic cultures from the Vautes style, which extends from the plains of Montpellier to the *garrigue* scrublands of the lower Cevennes region and seem to soften the transition between the Ferrières and Fontbouisse styles in the eastern Languedoc (Jallot 2003; Fig. 5.4.16). These vases also display a sphere or half-sphere shape and favour the addition of two knobs on each side of the handle. This type of vase, which is also present in the Ferrières Culture, has already been classified as anthropomorphic by Dr. Arnal (Arnal 1976: 83; Fig. 5.4.15).

Uterine vases

This category of vases distinguishes itself from the others as much on a functional level as on aesthetic and typological levels. They are often cylindrical or ovoid jars, or perhaps hemispheric vases whose primary use may have been for storing water or food, before they were reused for burial purposes. Visually, no ostentatious decoration hints at the anthropomorphic nature of these vases. Nevertheless, in archaeological literature, for any given period, they are frequently classified as “matrix” vases (Tchéremissinoff 2010: 349), or a link is made between these vases and a woman’s uterus, as is the case in the Roman world around Chartres (Portat 2014).

In relationship to the present study, this type of funerary vessel has been very little studied. The presence of a vase containing burned bones has been attested at the Italian Early Neolithic site of “Grotta Continenza” in the Abruzzo region (Grifoni Cremonesi 1987). In our opinion, this practice differs from what is covered by the category of matrix vases, but it seemed important to make a note of it.

It is in the Late Neolithic, in Fontbouissian contexts of the Languedoc region, that we find the remains of children in vases. One vase comes from the *garrigue* site of “Cambous” (Viols-en-Laval, France), while the other was discovered at the contemporaneous site of “Capoulière” plains site (Mauguio, France). The first one was uncovered in a locus whose function has been interpreted to be a storage area and which was situated adjacent to two dry-stone huts. The vase is hemispheric and measures 27 cm in diameter (Fig. 5.5.2).

The individual buried in the vessel is a baby only a few months old (Canet and Roudil 1978: 173–74; Poulain 1978: 188). The second vase was also found in a settlement area, away from the burial area, in a domestic pit (Fig. 5.5.1). A child of approximately the age of five to seven years was buried, lying down, in a jar. This jar was placed in the pit at the same time as the body of a woman (Cros 2004: 76–77). It is worth noting that these individuals were laid to rest in a domestic space instead of a space reserved for the dead. To our knowledge, for this period, there are no other known examples of jars used specifically for the burial of children. This type of practice, however, begins to take hold in the region, starting in the Early Bronze Age (Tchérémissinoff 2010).

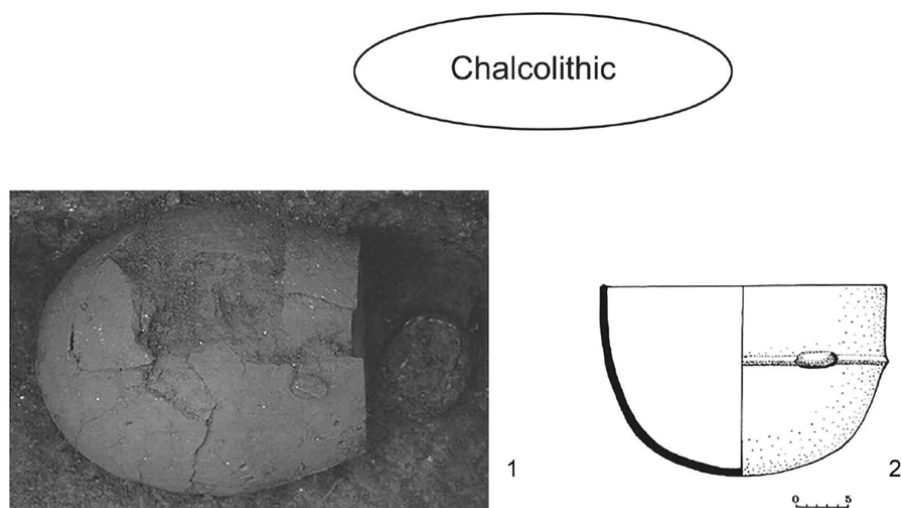


Figure 5.5: Fontbousse burial pottery. 1. La Capoulière, Maugeio, France (Cros 2004); 2. Cambous, Viol-en-Laval, France (Canet and Roudil 1978).

Exploratory synthesis on the subject of morphotypes and anthropomorphic decorations

Despite the use of the customary temporal division of the Western European Neolithic – the Early Neolithic between 6000 and 4500 BC, the Middle Neolithic between 4500 and the Late Neolithic between 3500 BC and 2200 BC – one must keep in mind that these limits are permeable, differing at times by a few hundred years, depending on the chronocultural era considered. It is, however, important not to overlook certain constant phenomena that are revealed by these three overarching themes.

Globular shapes embellished with necks and pairs of handles, attested as early as the first phases of the Early Neolithic Impresso style in southern Italy, persist within the Cardial and Epicardial styles

of Iberia. Here, we must emphasise the fact that the connections between these different spheres of the Early Neolithic are not fully understood, but they are, nevertheless, perceived to stem from a relatively homogenous phenomenon. Indeed, Cardial sites emerge from a rearrangement of the different Impresso realms attested in Liguria, as well as in the south of France (Manen 2014: 414–15). Furthermore, in our opinion, the schematic, anthropomorphic decorations illustrate this homogeneity that spans the entire western Mediterranean Early Neolithic chronocultural sphere. They continue in the Italian realm of Fiorano, in the Po plain, where the pottery is illustrative of the Middle Neolithic but seems to originate from the last phases of the Early Neolithic (Manen and Perrin 2009: 438), while also expanding to include a larger variety of morphotypes (globular vases, but also spherical, cap-shaped bowls, and carinated cups) (Bagolini and Biagi 1977: 222; Becker 2009: 77–78). Additionally, the realm of influence of this phase of the Neolithic is split between the northern manifestations of the Linear Pottery Culture (Bagolini and Biagi 1977: 220; Tozzi 2001: 153) and those of the southern Cardial (Bagolini and Biagi 1974; Manen and Perrin 2009: 438).

This type of neck/globular body/paired handle association also extends beyond the Early Neolithic, to be found in the Cortaillod style and Burgundian Middle Neolithic (BMN) productions in France and in Switzerland during the Middle Neolithic, as well as in the Eneolithic culture of Rinaldone in the form of so-called “gynaecomorphic” vases. Are the gynaecomorphic vases of the Rinaldone necropolis relics of Cortaillod influences, implying some sort of genetic relationship between the two facies? Despite difficulties in fully addressing this question, one should recall that relationships between northern Italy and the central Swiss Alps are assumed as early as the Early Neolithic (Gallay *et al.* 1987). For the Middle Neolithic, the likenesses between the pottery produced by agro-pastoral communities of southern France, southern Germany, the Swiss plateau and the Po Plain have sometimes incited researchers to posit the existence of a Chassey/Cortaillod/Lagozza Complex (Gallay 1977; Borello and Van Willigen 2013: 80). These relationships seem to linger, at least between southern France and the Swiss plateaus, for the last half of the 4th millennium, because Ferrières style vases are found as far inland as the Jura site of Clairvaux-les-Lacs (Pétrequin 1986: 179) and in western Switzerland (Pétrequin 2005: 794–95). It is also conceivable that contacts remain active between central and northern Italy, southern France, the Swiss plateaus and southern Germany at the end of the 3rd millennium during the final phases of the Neolithic, the Chalcolithic

and the Eneolithic. It is, however, archaeologically not possible to confirm a semantic continuity with Mediterranean Early Neolithic vases, because gynaecomorphic vessels seem to descend to a greater degree from northern traditions, whose substrate can be traced to Danubian customs. Notwithstanding the role of the relationship between the Chassean and Cortaillod realms, needs more examination as far as breast depictions are concerned, because it is possible, however unverified, that certain Chassean productions also stem from this type of theme. Nevertheless, despite thematic similarities, no stylistic likenesses link Cortaillod or BMN gynaecomorphic vases with those of Chassean manufacture.

As far as the face-related category is concerned, there is enough evidence to make a few assessments. The circular, eye-like decorations are a theme that spreads from the Iberian Peninsula to the French Atlantic coast. Moreover in general, except for a few known examples from the Early Neolithic, circular and semi-circular, sometimes concentric decoration seems to really take shape beginning in the Late Neolithic. It is also reasonable to wonder about the semantic content of the whole of this type of decoration, which was adopted during the last phase of the Neolithic. The relationship between the Los Millares Culture and Peu Richardien productions of central-western France has previously been explored with respect to their stylistic similarities (Burnez 1956: 386). This link is now confirmed for the second half of the 3rd millenium, primarily as a result of studies of the distribution of Palmela points and turtle buttons and of comparisons made between enclosure systems (Laporte 2009: 739–41).

Above, we shortly addressed the homogeneity seen in the schematic anthropomorphic decorations of the Late Mediterranean Neolithic. It is necessary to take this notion further, because it has already been the subject of several important observations concerning the relationships between the Italian Peninsula, southeastern Europe and the Balkans (Becker 2009: 55–57).

Where do filial ties between eastern and western productions lie?

The study of key anthropomorphic themes, when applied to northwestern Mediterranean Neolithic pottery, allows to detect phenomena of emergence, splitting and discontinuity. In particular, the issue of the emergence of the anthropomorphic pottery of our region of study brings up questions about their origins. To address them, we must also examine the other branch of neolithitisation. The Danubian current, which extended into the temperate zones of

Europe, is characterised by its linear pottery, which, from the Carpathian Basin to the Rhine River banks, provides numerous examples of anthropomorphic vases (Figs 5.6.1–13). It should be noted that beyond the Rhine River and into the Parisian Basin this type of pottery becomes rare, or even non-existent.

Schematic characters

We briefly addressed the presence of imprinted schematic characters on Early Neolithic *Impressa* style pottery, as well as in Early Neolithic Iberian productions. Although they are created using other techniques, these types of motifs are not unheard of in the Early Neolithic Linear Pottery Culture (L.P.C.) of Danubian contexts. Granted these renderings are sometimes ambiguous (M. Gimbutas sees them more as frog symbols: Gimbutas 1991: 35–43), however, the motif of a vertical torso with chevron bands at its base, seeming to represent bent legs, is similar (Figs 5.6.12–13). In our opinion, there is evidence to support the assertion that this theme stems from a sort of continuity, and that its origins may be found in the relationships maintained between the Italian Peninsula, southeastern Europe and the Balkans, as has already been suggested (Becker 2009: 55–57). Furthermore, the infiltration of the Danubian current is documented in the Po Plain (Tozzi 2001: 153).

Faces

The style of the faces depicted on Early Neolithic Italian pottery seems comparable to that of those on ceramics from the Adriatic region, such as the clay sculptures found at Achilleion in Thessaly (Greece), that show two slit eyes and a split mouth, as well as an appended nose (Figs 5.7.1–2; Gimbutas 1991: 23), or the anthropomorphic vase discovered at Nea Nikomedeia that also uses the same stylistic criteria (Fig. 5.7.3; Perlès 2001: 264–65). Farther away, in Bulgaria, at Tell Azmak, in the Karanova I style productions, an anthropomorphic vase was found, which depicts a face whose features are similar, with the exception of the mouth which is missing (Fig. 5.7.4; Gimbutas 1982: 99).

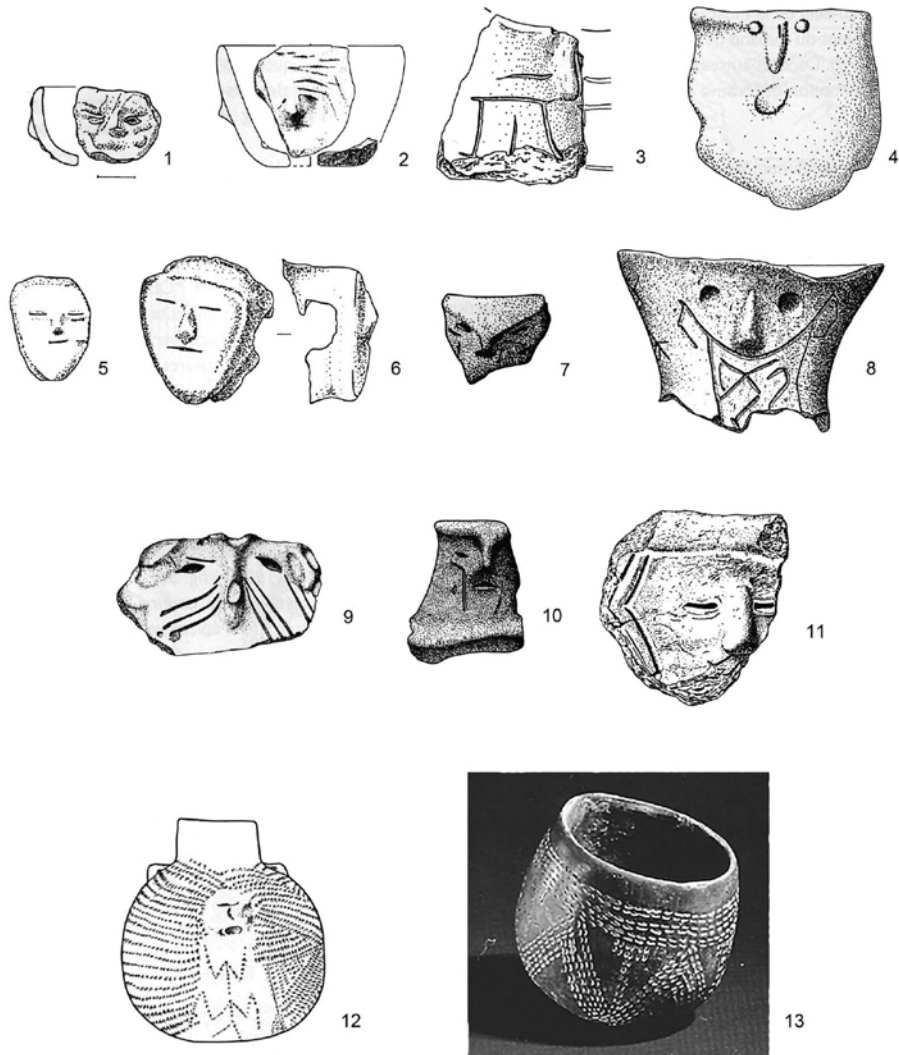


Figure 5.6: Anthropomorphic pottery in the Linear Pottery Culture/Rubané. 1. Kilianstätten; 2. Remerschen “Schengerwis”; 3. Nieder-Mörlen; 4. Köln-Lindenthal; 5. Čoka-Kremeniak; 6. Griedel; 7. Zauschwitz; 8. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt; 9. Zegotki; 10. Derenburg; 11. Hodmezővásárhely; 12. Königsau; 13. Brno area (Hauzeur 2006; Gimbutas 1991).



Figure 5.7: Anthropomorphic pottery and figurines of the Adriatic and Balkan regions. 1. Achilleion, Greece (Gimbutas 1991); 2. Tell Souphli, Larissa, Greece (Gimbutas 1991); 3. Nea Nikomedeia, Greece (Perlès 2001); 4. Tell Azmak, Bulgaria (Gimbutas 1982).

The Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic productions of the Languedoc region, the Iberian Peninsula and the Atlantic coast, however, exhibit a different phenomenon. As far as Languedocian productions of the 4th and 3rd millennia BC are concerned, noses and mouths are formed with plastic applications, and the portrayal of the face is more suggestive, or meant to evoke its presence. Similarly, as far as we know, the sun-shaped or circular eyes of the Iberian Peninsula are unique in our realm of study, aside from a few anthropomorphic vases from Denmark, which are very much like the “occulado” vases of the Los Millares Culture. We are at a loss to explain this phenomenon.

Matrix vases: Eastern influences or reinvention of funerary practices?

The origins of jar burials or vases dedicated to the interment of young

children in the northern Mediterranean are difficult to interpret. These practices are not well-documented, but they strongly suggest similar practices mentioned for the Levant and the Balkans: the method of burial, the place of burial as well as the age of the deceased suggest a filial relationship. The only caveat is that the distance, as well as the geographic and temporal hiatus between practices in the Levant, eastern Europe and those in western Europe are difficult to interpret. One must not eliminate the hypothesis of an entirely independent phenomenon from the first ritual practices of the Levant and the Balkans that may have created or recreated itself as similar cultural traits.

In addition, it is important to note that the cinerary urn from “Grotta Continenza” is not the only instance for the Early Neolithic, since the site of “Soufli Magoula” in Greece unveiled similar practices (Perlès 2001: 274–76).

This type of burial practice, however, is not limited to the Levant and Europe and can also apply to ancestor-related practices. According to several studies of the Sao people, who disappeared in the 13th century, as well as their descendants, the Kotoko, ritual practices consisted in burying ancestors in jars (Seliquier 1941; Hartweg 1942; Griaule and Lebeuf 1948). It seems logical that this ancient practice could have regularly been reinvented in several places at different times. Whether these reinventions highlight a nearly universal practice or if its recurring nature is a random feature of cultural evolution and inventions remains to be seen.

Methodological proposal for the analysis of anthropomorphic characters on Neolithic pottery

To separate our subject of study, the pottery, from classical typomorphological descriptive analyses and bring it into the field of social anthropology, in order to subject it to interpretation, we have chosen to view it as a contextualised collection of symbols. We do not claim to be able to interpret and understand these objects, but we will, nevertheless, attempt to formulate an incomplete grammar, in order to outline some of the rules and laws that evolve in space and time.

For this reason, we have drawn frameworks that link the body with clay and the body with pottery, from resources composed of mythological tales, ethnographic and ethno-archaeological studies of the discourse.

Three forms of expression associating the body with pottery stood out in the study of these different mediums: all are interwoven with metaphor and express an almost genetic, structural or metonymic

relationship, or fall in the category of personification.

The genesis of man from clay and vases

The biblical book of Genesis, like the story of Gilgamesh, tells of God's creation of man from earth. This familiar origin story actually echoes numerous other tales, some of which have been gathered by X. Yvanoff (1998). Among the stories that highlight the relationship between the body and the pot, consider the Amazonian Guarani myth that relates the creation of the first woman in a pot by two gods, who had been tired of being alone. In this case, the link between the body of a woman and clay is expressed even in language, as the word "clay", *nui*, and the word "woman", *nua*, are phonetically very similar (Yvanoff 1998: 307–08).

Among the Dogons, the act of making pottery calls upon symbolic gestures that refer back to the cosmogenesis of the tribe, because these gestures imitate those of the great mythic potter who, in the same manner, created the world illustrating more specifically the technical metamorphosis of pots from raw material to burned clay (Yvanoff 1998: 308). Examples are abundant. This type of myth or popular tradition shows the almost structural or genetic relationship that links man's body to that of a vase. Much as one might say that two people with similar traits are cut from the same mould, one might also add that these myths depict the men and the vases within a community as having been crafted from the same clay.

The association between man's creation and a potter's work is well-known among the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa. Explaining the origin of man as being the work of a potter is not unusual, and the gestation of a child can also be likened to the formation and firing of pottery. This association is so strong that Thonga, Lovedu and Sotho newborns of southern Africa receive the same smoking treatment as pots (Gosselain 2002: 205).

One might suggest that the entire anthropomorphic clay art, whether vases or statuettes, originates from this type of relationship. Nevertheless, these tendencies are difficult to distinguish in archaeological contexts. Therefore, what is suggested here is subjective and demands to consider the possibility that the Valencian Cardial impressions of schematic characters on the bodies of vases embellished with a pair of handles could be a staging of the genetic or structural relationship between body and vase.

Man as vessel and vessel as man

In several West African cultures, phenomena involving the body and

the pot are manifested, not only in different beliefs surrounding the potting operational sequence, but also by corporeal practices employed by the ruler of the Mankon kingdom of Cameroon, as illustrated by J.-P. Warnier (Warnier 2009). Several mechanisms are derived from this process. Unlike the genetic relationship that underlines the similarities between a vase's structural material and that of a body, here, emphasis is placed on the similarities between the organic function of the body and the vase's function.

Man as vessel

Indeed, the bulk of Warnier's work deals with the use of corporeal practices used to connect individuals. The Mankon king's body, as the container and overseer of the shared heritage of ancestral substances, takes on the role of a vessel. His body is filled with ancestral substances that he distributes to his subjects. J.-P. Warnier tells, how, during group festivals, the king sprays a mixture of raffia wine and his own saliva over the crowds so that they may partake of these ancestral substances. Warnier, furthermore, adds that the king's body is not considered a vessel, but that, indeed, it is one (Warnier 2009: 24). According to Warnier, the Mankon king's body is of several natures. Despite the natural physical envelope, the monarch's skin, creating a barrier between the king and other people, the royal palace is an extension of the royal body; and the limits established by its protective fences act as his own.

The beliefs and taboos that dictate the function of the potting operational sequence in southern Cameroon were recorded by O. Gosselain (Gosselain 2002: 199–215). A specific example is supplied by the fact that the Okiek people forbid men to assist in the manufacture of a vase. O. Gosselain cites Kratz, who quoted one female potter as having stated,

[...] because they have killed. They have gone about killing animals, killed people (enemies), killed their relatives. So, if they see it, it breaks. The pot dies (Kratz 1989: 68).

The personification of the pot, that has been infused with the ability to die, illustrates the transfer phenomena that flow from Man to vase.

Personification

Personification calls to mind a particular individual. This type of personification is illustrated by practices of the Ila people of Zambia. Tradition dictates that, when a mother searches for a wife for her son, she must ask the families of neighbouring villages whether a pot is available. It is understood that the pot in question is a woman

available for marriage (Smith and Dale 1920: 46).

In the archaeological corpus submitted here, the “occulado” vases of the Los Millares Culture are those that best fit this semantic field. Those faces and the emphasis places on the eyes evoke a character more than a physical trait. However, it is not possible to determine if they symbolise a god, a man, or an ancestor.

The “organic” vase

The metonymic relationships between the pot and the body essentially aim to focus attention on a particular part or function of the human body, as imitated by the vase. Metaphorical allusions referring to the uterus are commonplace in cosmogonical myths, some of which were cited above. A Menomini tribal tale explains how the vase gains the ability to gestate and stand in for the mother’s womb (Yvanoff 1998: 310–11). These metaphorical allusions also abound in ethnographic documentation. All of the taboos surrounding the potting operational sequence in southern Cameroon concern fertility (Gosselain 2002: 204–05). This conveys how important the relationship between the female womb and pottery is.

The matrix vases found in archaeological contexts are some of the most representative examples of this metonymic function. Here, the vase’s body is reduced to the uterine organ, functioning as a prosthetic replacement for gestational purposes. Many hypotheses could be posited about the beliefs that dictate this type of practice. For one thing, these objects testify to a double need. First is the need for certain Neolithic populations to provide a mode of burial that distinguishes one part of the community from the rest. The criteria for this distinction are based, at the least, on age, because the majority of individuals buried in vases range between the ages of zero and seven years old (although sometimes beyond, particularly in the case of cremation). Secondly, the mode of burial, that itself seems to be the result of another necessity whose exact outline is difficult to trace, but which, nevertheless, demands this offer to certain young children, a grave that allows them to benefit in death from the gestational environment they experienced before birth.

Without, of course, being able to determine the reasons and beliefs that encourage these Neolithic communities to place certain young deceased individuals in the foetal position, these practices are thought-provoking. It would seem that this burial practice creates a *medium* designed to allow new-borns and young children to continue or even finish the gestation process. This would be perfectly logical if the individuals found in such jars were exclusively new-borns or

stillborn. Instead, these practices incorporate older individuals, sometimes even adolescents. Thus, this state of gestation and unfinished nature does not apply to an individual's natural, biological rhythm. Perhaps it is necessary to consider that this gestation and lack of completion correspond more to a social rhythm. Ethnographic studies document numerous traditions, particularly in western and central Africa, indenting, through the use of rituals, to help children move through various stages, leading them to become fully-integrated into the community as adults (Jaulin 1971: 399–404; Cissé 2005: 113–34). These initiation customs were occasionally still practiced in the 1950s across parts of the French countryside, and their echo is still heard in numerous literary works (Sartre 1964; Chateaubriand 1982, to cite only a couple). These practices, connecting young boys with nature, involved observing birds, recognising and imitating their calls, discovering their nests, and catching, or perhaps taming, larger and larger specimens. Capturing a bird of prey marked the passage into adulthood. The traditional customs, reserved for boys, also aimed to teach them the language of love and passion, little by little leading them towards sexual maturity, later replacing bird hunting with a quest for girls (Fabre 1986).

Another possibility, which does not necessarily exclude the first one, considers the possibility that these modes of burial incorporate practices linking death with life, demise with rebirth. These practices, therefore, allow the child to finish its gestation in death, offering it the possibility of rebirth, on Earth or in another world. Of course, it is very difficult to make assumptions about the Neolithic followers of such practices, but we catch glimpses of their link to recurring thought structures present elsewhere. Opposing associations of symbols or images involving notions of death and life are common. The allegory of death incarnate in the Breton tales of Ankou, for example, is often depicted as a human skeleton or an old man, wearing a large cape and carrying a mallet, a spade or a scythe, even though these are not, strictly speaking, weapons. The scythe, in particular, is a farming tool that reminds us that, before being reduced to an implement of death, the Ankou was an ambivalent character, delivering both life and death (Sterckx 2014). The myth of Persephone echoes this traditional imagery, since the daughter of Demeter, goddess of agriculture and harvests, is taken by the ruler of the underworld, Hades.

The anthropological interpretation of the burial rite proposed by G. Durand (Durand 1992: 269–93) seems quite appropriate here. According to his assertions, whether the deceased be buried or

cremated, it seems that he is systematically offered, in the burial rite, a container in which to rest, in the foetal position, providing a cosy place where he can prepare for his return. For this reason, G. Durand gladly associates the home, the burial vase, the cave and the burial pit as arising from the same symbolic, fantastical place, designed to regenerate the body. Thus, the interment of the body is “the antiphrasis of death”, highlighting the isomorphosis of the “sepulchre-cradle”. On this same subject, O. Gosselain states that the “clay pit is like a tomb” for the people of the central, southern and eastern parts of southern Cameroon (Gosselain 2002: 201). This relationship between sepulchre and home or vase is quite reminiscent of the anthropomorphic ceramic homes of the Balkans (Naumov 2010), as well as the practices involving burying the dead under homes (Naumov 2014). M. Gimbutas has also found this analogy between the tomb and the perpetual uterus in Latvian songs (Gimbutas 2006: 181–86).

Coming back to the metonymy of the uterus, G. Durand reminds us that the work undertaken by C. G. Jung (Jung 1932: 353) brought him to demonstrate the etymological relationships between Indo-European terms for hollows and those referring to cups. Also, the terms for “cavity”, “lap”, “gut”, as well as “vault”, “coffer”, and “goblet” all have the same etymological roots.

Finally, though these practices concern, almost exclusively, only individuals who have yet to reach maturity, the majority of whom are between the ages of zero and seven, they do not apply to all individuals in this age range. Therefore, we must concede that age is not the only criteria and other criteria, lost to us, are probably of a sociological nature.

Drinking and the breast

This metonymic function does not merely apply to the uterus, as the female breast is also the subject of this type of discourse. Such is the case, for example, among the Karanga of Zimbabwe, where *shambakodzi* type vases are associated with the maternal breast (Evers *et al.* 1988: 739).

In addition, the gynaecomorphic vases of the Cortaillod, BMN and Rinaldone Cultures fall in the category of metonymy. Along similar lines, paired handles, common in the Neolithic assemblage in our area of study should also be viewed in this same light. The functional role of this type of double handle must not mask its participation in the general meaning assumed by the vase.

Towards an anthropology of pottery

[...] it is very important to note that a technical characteristic can have both the function of modifying the state of the material as well as meaning something for someone. Most often, working with the material and creating meaning are two phenomena incapable of being untangled. (Lemonnier 1991: 17).

Despite the impossibility of reconstructing the meaning of anthropomorphic productions here, it is, however, possible to partially highlight the mechanisms at work. Not all anthropomorphic vases are anthropomorphic in the same way, for example. Some allude to the entire body, others to the head or face, while still others evoke certain corporeal functions instead of the entire body. It therefore seems logical that symbols suggestive of a body part do not insinuate the same signifiers as those symbols that allude to the face, for example. Different fields of signifiers are, therefore, called into play. The archaeological context of these objects also reveals something about their field of application. A gynaecomorphic Cortaillod style vase found in a domestic context does not call into play the realm of the dead, while the gynaecomorphic vases found at the Rinaldone necropolis does not (or no longer do) draw upon the realm of the living at the moment of their placement inside the tomb. For the same type of vase, their intended spheres ultimately diverge.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that all funerary jars used to receive very young decedents are identical to domestic jars. One would, therefore, assume that these vases were not initially conceived for burial purposes, but that they were redirected from their domestic use to fulfil a funerary need.

One wonders about the gender of such vases. Despite the fact that the Cortaillod vases and Rinaldone necropolis vases as well as certain Valencian Cardial vases and matrix vases allude to a woman's body, the question of which gender applies to head and face-related vases seems secondary, because no symbols appear to indicate a notion of femininity or masculinity.

To conclude, it is important to underline the major characteristic common to all of these objects, no matter how they have been categorised here: they are all, by their very nature, containers. In our opinion, it is from this very perspective that one must examine the relationship between body and vase in the Neolithic, because the main purpose of this type of anthropomorphic medium is to conjure what other anthropomorphic representations are unable to convoke, namely the interior space of the body. Engravings, paintings and statuettes summon an idealised, fantasised image of the body, or a corporeal dynamic. Vases evoke the unseen parts of the body, its organic

function, its internal mechanics, circulation phenomena between the interior and the exterior, transformation phenomena, digestion, absorption and distribution phenomena. The connection between transformation, pottery and the body has already been underlined by O. Gosselain (Gosselain 2002: 207). The wall of the vase, whose purpose is to contain, defines the limit between the exterior, visible part of the body that shows itself to the outside world, and the interior, hidden space of the body. One last reminder: despite the fact that the body metaphor is strongly maintained across a large part of the African continent, the pots themselves do not necessarily bear anthropomorphic traits. Found in an archaeological context, these vases' lack of obvious symbolism would certainly be subtracted from their metaphorical value. Likewise, it is legitimate to wonder about the status of Neolithic pots devoid of overt anthropomorphic symbolism.

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Chapter 6

The social role of Neolithic face pots

Ivan Pavlů and Radka Šumberová

Introduction

Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic pots are widespread in all kinds of cultures around the world (Naumov 2008). We can therefore consider this topic a global one in archaeology, similarly to other topics such as caves, shell middens, megaliths, cave paintings and many more. It is, however, necessary for practical reasons to delimit their study in terms of both time and space. We are going to focus on Neolithic findings from the central European area and comparable objects from the Balkans and the ancient Near East.

We work on the assumption that all pots, not only the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic ones, were personified to a certain extent and that their role in prehistoric society derived from this context.

Explicit personification of face pots

In the first part, we would like to show that personification of Neolithic pottery is demonstrated in the category of face pots, both in their shapes and their decoration. Both these aspects enable us to interpret them as means used within the frameworks of supposed family cults. Explicit personification of pots can be defined as a symbolical depiction which identifies the pots in the ideology of the society.

The personification of pottery is a direct base for the use of pottery in archaeology, similar to the use of written historical sources in history. However, we cannot agree with more extensive identification of pottery with social or even ethnic groups. Anthropology proves that these relations are irregular and in cases of large pottery units can be utterly misleading. Cultural unity based on pottery of the same style

or execution is not an evidence of social unity.

Typology and terminology

The following pots have been classified as anthropomorphic: shaped like the human body or parts of it; facial with embossed or painted depiction of the human face; facial pot-lids and sculptures which hold a miniature pot (Tichý 1958; Schwarzberg 2010: 137). The variability of such objects is richer in the Neolithic. Broader categories could be constituted by sculptural relief and figural pots themselves, and they would include the aforementioned classification. In this narrower sense the characteristic trait is the depiction of the human face, which nevertheless transcends the limits we have set (Naumov 2008: 98). That is why an all-inclusive classification has not yet been established. Such a classification would have to be included in some kind of sub-discipline of art history with not only archaeological, but also anthropological, ethnographic, historic and other contexts.

Ethnolinguistic terminology, which relates not only to shapes of the aforementioned area of study, but to all pottery shapes and their parts, is often based on the words denominating the human body and its parts known from anthropology and ethnographic studies (David, Sterner and Gavua 1988: 367; Naumov 2008: 96) as well as modern languages. It is subconsciously perceived as completely natural and mostly without anthropomorphic connotations. At the same time, within the framework of the topic, it is the basis for the interpretation of the meaning of specific pottery shapes, their social role and consequently also social activities which could have been associated with them.

New face pot findings in Bohemia

Evidence of face pots as well as other figural pottery is relatively scarce; however, since they are quite noticeable amongst settlement findings, they have already been the subject matter of several listings (Pavlů 1998b; most recently Kalicz and Koós 2000; Raczky and Anders 2005; Kruta and Lička 2000; Kruta *et al.* 2009; Schwarzberg 2010). Any new finding is therefore quickly identified and also fairly swiftly published (Fig. 6.1). New additions of similar findings from frequent Neolithic research conducted in Bohemia in recent times are not very numerous. We can only mention one fragment of a face pot from the 2008 research in Kolín.

Kolín face pot

During the research of the planned bypass of the I/38 road around Kolín, six localities with Neolithic components on the area of 40 ha to the west and south of the town were examined. Four Linear Pottery Culture settlements were uncovered, as well as four sites with Stroked Pottery Culture with circular enclosures (rondels) and isolated evidence of burial activities. The rondels contained numerous artefacts connected to the Lengyel Culture (Šumberová *et al.* 2010; Šumberová 2012).

One part of a face amphora was found in the proximity of rondel 3 in area VII, on the right bank of Polepský creek whose confluence with the river Elbe is about 1.5 km away. The rondel consists of one trench and an inner palisade, with an outer diameter of 75 m and east and west gates. North and south entrances must have existed but had been destroyed by the construction of roads and railway lines. The face amphora segment was found in the filling of a pit (object no. 1848), less than 80 metres to the southeast of the rondel. The pit complex consisted of storage pits and two fireplaces; the pot fragment was recovered from segment 3 in the southern part of the pit complex, from the depth of between 40 and 50 cm from the surface of the subsoil (the middle part of the filling of a storage pit).



Figure 6.1: Face pots in Europe.

The findings from this object have not been published in a conclusive way yet; the face pot is depicted in the catalogue of the

exhibition on the research (Šumberová 2012: 110, fig. 58). The dimensions of the fragment are 7.9×7.5 cm, a slightly retracted edge of an originally kettle-shaped vessel from a fine, brown-grey sandy material has been preserved (Figs 6.2–6.3). Under the edge, we can see two round cusped navels, located in an uneven distance; between those two navels two opposite lines are executed in triple incision tremolo technique. The face is shown in profile, with relief depiction of the contours of the cheeks, chin, superciliary arches and nose. A subtle hollow probably represents the left eye, while the mouth with a hint of lips is more pronounced. From the root of the nose to the lower part of the cheeks we can distinguish another triple incision line. The neck is accentuated by a single line of double incision executed by a tool with spikes of various sizes. Despite the fact that the face is rendered as a relief, which formally fits in with similar Linear Pottery Culture findings, it is unique when it comes to dating. Partly preserved decoration is executed as triple incision, characteristic for late Stroked Pottery Culture, which could correspond with presumed dating of the nearby rondel (^{14}C data from the layers in the lower part of the trench of rondel 3 range between 4925–4763 BC). The finding of this face pot would therefore be rated among the latest known artefacts of this kind in central Europe. The ornament consisting of a single line of incisions accompanying a face relief can be found on a pottery fragment from Ringingen (Kreis Alb-Donau); the dating of this fragment is, however, uncertain (Schwarzberg 2010: 155). A finding of a face on a beaker pot from Heldrungen (Kr. Artern) in Germany can also be dated to a late period of the Stroked Pottery Culture (Kaufmann 1984: 153).



Figure 6.2: Kolín, face pot segment, photo.

A face amphora and bowl from Močovice (Kutná Hora region)

The first artefact to draw attention to face pots in Bohemia comes from the 1925 research in the fields northwest to the Močovice village near Čáslav. This research was carried out by teacher and headmaster Emanuel Chramosta (Pavlů 1998a), who in the course of three years examined a number of Neolithic features. The research was well documented given the period; the original documentation contains an account of the location of the face pot in a pit denoted as pit 75 (Figs 6.4–6.5). Thanks to the original documentation, it was possible to identify the face pot in the Čáslav museum depository in the early 1960s. Apart from the face pot, the depository also held a bowl with extraordinary decoration consisting of Neolithic symbols. The bowl is not recorded in the original documentation, but given the identical execution of ceramic matrix, the manner of burning and decoration, we can justifiably include the bowl in the same context as the face

amphora (Figs 6.6–6.7).

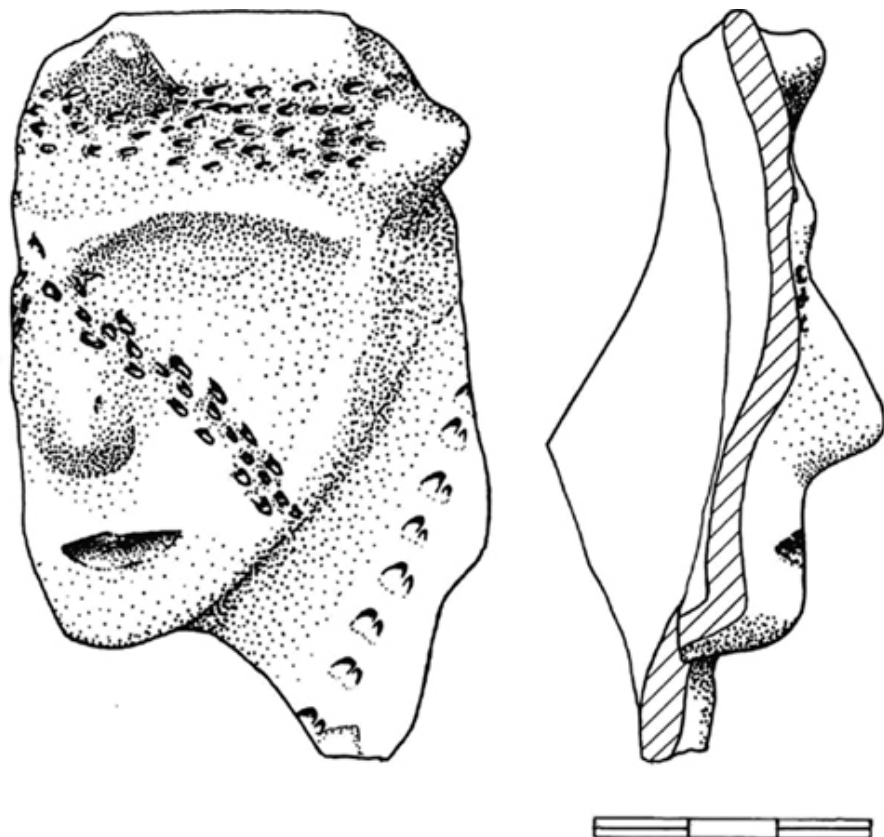


Figure 6.3: Kolín, face pot segment, drawing.

The Močovice face pot is not, as is the case with most findings, preserved in its entirety; its bottom bulge is missing. The bowl, on the other hand, was found almost intact. The process of fragmentarisation has affected the two artefacts, which undoubtedly did not serve as containers for everyday use, in a different way. We can presume that they were only used on certain occasions: the amphora was filled with liquids and the bowl with some kind of solid matter. We can only speculate about what the liquid was, but we can assume it was a valuable one, since the amphora is equipped with a gouge under the neck, which probably served to prevent the liquid from spilling. This liquid might have been the blood or the milk of a sacrificed animal; however, an analysis of the residues has not yet been carried out. As for the bowl, it most probably could have contained grains.

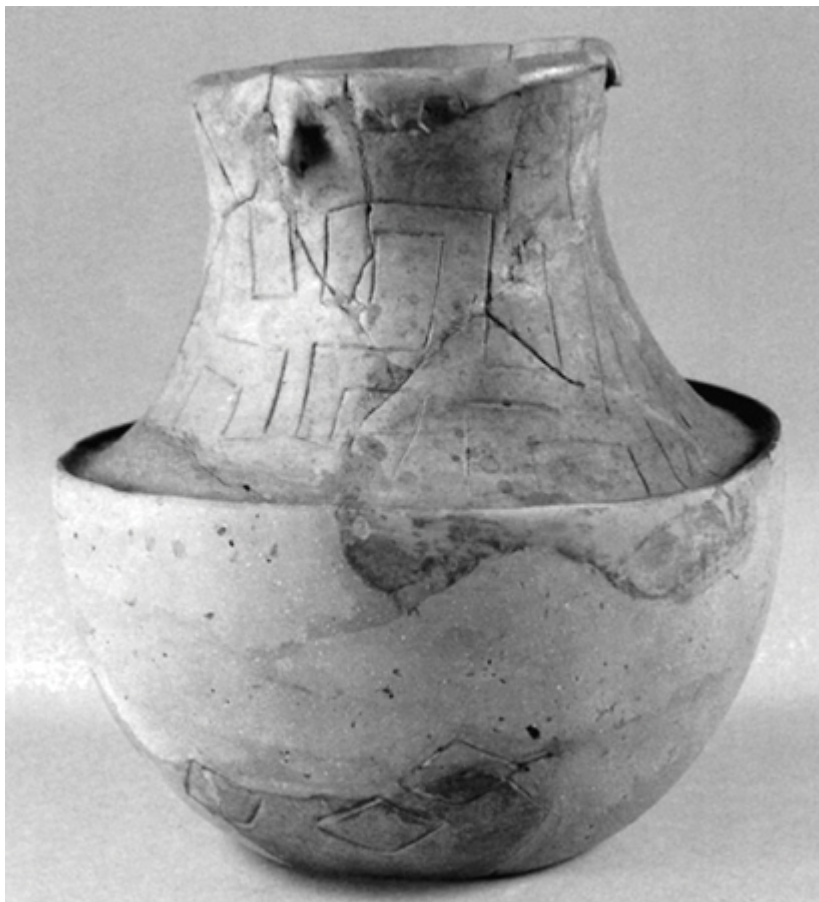


Figure 6.4: Močovice, face amphora, photo.

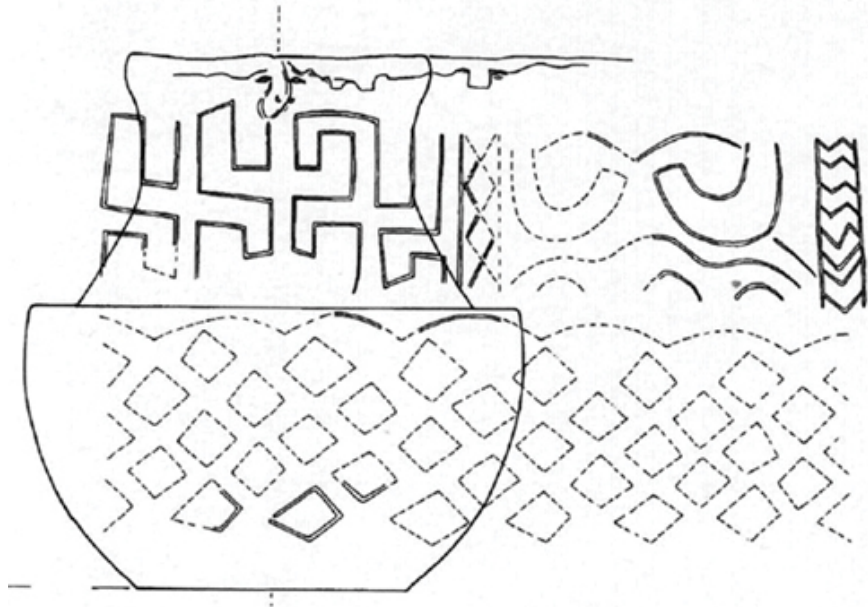


Figure 6.5: Močovice, face amphora, drawing.

The importance of the contents of the pots is emphasised by their decoration. We can see a central symbol under the face on the front side of the amphora and a spiral on the back side of its neck. On its body, we can find partially preserved planar rhomboids. All these elements can be found individually among the ornaments used to decorate ordinary, everyday-use pots, but the significance lies in the whole set in one shape, which is markedly personified by an embossed face. The face is accentuated by a relief superciliary arch and nose; the eyes and mouth, however, are missing. This constitutes the main difference between the amphora and the latest finding from Kolín, which shows all the features of the face. The pots are separated by several centuries, and the fact that the depiction of the human face on these pots changed only very slightly demonstrates a long-standing tradition of face pots in the Czech Neolithic.



Figure 6.6: Močovice, bowl, photo.



Figure 6.7: Močovice, bowl, drawing.

The bowl shows a set of individual symbols also including a kind of a central symbol, resembling the letter M. Next to it there is a group of Vs and semi-arches. As we already stated in the case of the amphora, these ornaments occur in the decoration of other pots; for example, semi-arches are very common in Močovice pots and the Vs are a common supplementary ornament. Decoration elements on the bottom

of the bowl are not executed very clearly. The whole set of symbols that decorate the sides and the bottom of the wall can (in connection to the amphora) be considered as a form of personification. Unlike the planar or orbital layout of symbols on the amphora, individual symbols are separated on the bowl. In our opinion, the bowl constitutes some kind of a concrete information which would fall into the area of the sociology of the ornament (Pavlů 2000: 167), but we do not know its content. Similar symbol depictions on clay disks or seals (Lazarovici, Lazarovici and Merlini 2011: 190–208), or on various ceramic moulds (Gimbutas 1989) are known from the Balkan Neolithic.

Findings of face pots in context

From a typological point of view bottle-shaped pots with a distinctively executed neck and embossed with a face depiction and other anthropomorphic ornaments can be denoted as face pots of the Central European type. Characteristically, these pots are of medium size, but in some cases can come to be large as well. They are usually found within settlement findings and partially fragmented. There is only one exception: the Kleinfahner amphora (Kaufmann 1991) which was discovered in a grave and preserved almost in its entirety.

There are parallel findings of face pots in the Balkans and the Near East. Face pots transcend the boundaries of different Neolithic cultures which have been defined based primarily on pottery. They are relatively rare in Linear Pottery cultures and more frequent in contemporary cultures in the central part of the Danubian Lowland and the Tisza region. Further on, in the Balkans and the Near East, face pots occur only sporadically (Pavlů 2010). Within the territories with Linear Pottery cultures, face pots commonly occur since the earliest period, as shown in the type with the symbol denoted as “omega” (Schwarzberg 2010: 149). They are also frequent in the Želiezovce group (Pavúk 1981) in the Danubian Lowlands (the oldest face pots found originate from this region) and in the Transdanubian Linear Pottery Culture territory (Pavlů 1981). The relatively specific type of symbol (“U”) and decoration is known from the Alföld Linear Pottery Culture territory. This subtype contains details which correspond with their counterparts from the Near East.

Central European Neolithic pots can be dated to the period of several centuries before and after 5000 BC, which distinguishes them from the Balkan pots, *e.g.* Nea Nikomedeia (6300 BC), and the models from the Near East which also date to the period around 6000 BC. A possible exception are the pots from Koşk Hüyük and Hassuna (5200

Interpretation of face pots

Comparison of decorative elements and visual sources from the Ancient Near East can contribute to the interpretation of the meaning and role of face pots. The most important comparative source is the whole decorative system in EVI.8 house at Çatalhöyük (Mellart 1964: fig. 7; Soudský and Pavlů 1966), in which we can see a relief of a schematised female figure on one wall and underneath it a bull's head on the floor. These are the main characters of one possible scheme, that with a symbolism of rebirth and regeneration (Gimbutas 1989: 252). In our opinion, this is also the principle of scenes depicted on Central European face pots (c. 5300-4500 BC). If the central symbol represents the female principle, then logically the depicted face is supposed to represent the male principle.

We are of course unable to decipher a more precise meaning of the rest of the symbols and ornaments. Why the face would be depicted realistically is also unclear. There might already have been a shift of the whole myth in time and space, since the time difference between the Močovice pot and the decoration in Çatalhöyük (c. 6200 BC) is a thousand years. We can therefore interpret the Močovice pot as a part of some kind of family cults relating to the origins of a concrete family (comp. Soudský and Pavlů 1996: 119). The same would apply to other less comprehensibly decorated face pots. Also, the medium size of the pots corresponds to the hypothesis. Similar artefacts of larger sizes from the Pannonian Basin and lower Danubian Lowlands could have similar meaning, but relate to a wider social unit.

The second comparable visual source is the face pot from Hacilar I (6000 BC), included by M. Gimbutas in the category of the snake goddess (Gimbutas 1989: 127–28). The interpretation is based on the assumption that the spiral ornament represents snakes which stand for legs. In relation to the Central European face pots, we would prefer to relate this artifact to the face pots with the symbol “U” that are common in the Tizsa region. There is also a correspondence with some other details of the decoration, such as the zig-zag “hair”. The main element of the decorative system is probably the sketch of a vessel. The whole is comparable to sculptural reliefs in the territories with Linear Pottery Culture. We assume its meaning will be similar to the meaning of the earlier face pots; the difference being the position of the face, which probably constitutes a unity with the whole shape and therefore cannot be interpreted as a separate symbol in a dichotomic depiction of the relation.

Implicit personification of pottery and house types

Face pots are undoubtedly an illustration of the explicit personification of Neolithic artefacts. Their image elements are clearly intelligible to us. However, they are not amongst the most frequent findings; the number of discovered face pots is much lower than the number of vessels we usually call everyday utility pots.

The personification of everyday utility pots in Neolithic society is implicitly manifest in the perception of shapes, their parts, and decoration. The original terminology is not available for us, but we can indirectly observe the variability in preferences, especially in their relation to individual house types of the Linear Pottery Culture. The differences in the preferred attributes can be interpreted as differences in the constitution of concrete social groups or families who inhabited these houses. *Implicit personification* can be defined as a changing role of pots in practical activities in various sections of society. We conclude that these “common” pots were also personified in a way, at least in certain situations and aspects of life in Neolithic society. The personification of pots becomes a part of social expression of the whole settlement.

Consequences

The existing results of the analyses of the distribution of animal bones within the settlement and of the distribution of artefacts between the different types of houses lead to the assumption that families of different origins lived together in one settlement (Pavlu 2013). These results also require a revision of our previous theories about the Neolithic in Bohemia as well as the theories about the entire process of neolithisation of the Danubian Linear Pottery Culture region. Abundant literature and the discussion that has been going on for nearly a hundred years, from the formation of the first concepts until today, are not in favour of these results. If we accept the theory that the two societies met in the same places and that their members lived in the same settlements, a number of issues instantly become easier to solve. The Neolithic, represented in this period by Linear Pottery, was on a certain scale a symbiosis of different socio-economic groups of inhabitants in one given space. They lived next to each other in separated regions with different natural conditions or in the same microregions with different subsistence variants, or even in the same settlements in neighbouring houses. In such close co-existence they might have used the same kinds of pottery, and it is therefore impossible to distinguish between the different groups according to the ceramics they used. The social role of implicitly personified utility

pots as well as the ritual role of explicitly personified pots have played corresponding parts in this process. Face pots concurrently demonstrate broader cultural and geographic context.

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Chapter 7

Figurines and other bodies: A matter of scale

Daniela Hofmann

In his recent volume on the interpretation of small clay anthropomorphic figurines, Robert Lesure (2011) has identified context as a key variable for further cross-cultural comparative analysis. His comparison of material from Palaeolithic Europe, the Neolithic Near East and adjacent areas, and early agricultural societies in Mesoamerica was a response to what he characterised as a retreat into particularistic narratives, which had in turn emerged as a response to over-generalised interpretations of the “Mother Goddess” kind. Lesure’s aim was to rediscover the rich interpretive resource of comparison and contrast. This can be achieved for a variety of analytical goals, defined on the basis of whether the focus are the routine understandings of figurine users (“surface”) or the kinds of implications that were rarely discursively reflected upon and of which users may well have been unaware (“structure”). These can then be variously applied to an analysis of subject matter, style, or context to provide a rich field of potential research questions (Lesure 2011: 51; [Tab. 7.1](#)). However, Lesure’s wide-ranging study in the end showed that there was little mileage in comparing the figurines as isolated objects, or in looking at only specific stylistic traits. Instead, the most fruitful way forward to him seemed the differential contextualisation of figurines in their respective societies (Lesure 2011: 210).

He therefore called for a comparison of how figurines are embedded in political, social, or even religious or artistic discourses to help us address questions such as why figurines across many prehistoric societies are indeed so much more often female (or unsexed) than male. For Lesure, the scale at which this is to be attempted is global and the time depth considerable. Using the notion of enstoriment, I

will attempt to apply this method to a single geographically circumscribed phenomenon, in this case the Linearbandkeramik culture (LBK, c. 5500–4900 cal. BC), to try to understand whether the contextualisation of figurines could also have differed at this smaller scale. Looking at different regions, I compare the frequency and kinds of figurines to other archaeological evidence, mainly burial customs. While this ultimately proves inconclusive, this study highlights the subversive potential of these small clay anthropomorphs in LBK society.

Table 7.1: Analytical matrix for figurines as developed by Lesure (2011: 51). Some examples for LBK literature are given, but these are not comprehensive. Also, any given study generally combines more than one of these aspects

	Content	Form	Context
Surface	Iconography – what is depicted? <i>e.g. Reinecke 1977</i>	Synchronic stylistic analysis – what do other contemporary artefacts/practices look like? <i>e.g. Hofmann 2014</i>	Use – what was the figure for? <i>e.g. Sauter et al. 2002</i>
Structure	Symbolic analysis – what is the deeper meaning of what is depicted? <i>e.g. Wunn 2001</i>	Diachronic stylistic analysis – is there change over time? <i>e.g. Becker 2011: 157–253</i>	“Window on society” – what can we learn about social structure? <i>e.g. Lüning 2005</i>

Contextualising LBK figurines

Background

Perhaps predictably, LBK figurines were long seen as an artistically inferior adjunct to the south-east European “mother goddess” tradition of figurine production (e.g. Maurer 1981: 70; Wunn 2001). In contrast, more recent work has stressed the innovations and conventions that set this corpus apart from its contemporary counterparts, for example increased attention to an elaboration of the head, particularly the eyes and hair (e.g. Gallay and Hansen 2006). Having also established that LBK figurines are relatively rare, always found in a fragmented state, and include examples of human-animal and human-object hybridism (the latter mainly involving vessels), scholars have begun to draw links with LBK funerary practices and treatments of the body (e.g. Höckmann 1985; Hofmann 2014). Following the identification of possible descent-based groupings and their postulated role in land ownership (e.g. Strien 2005; Bogaard *et al.* 2011) and in the geographical expansion of the LBK (Friedrich 2005: 105), there have also been suggestions that figurines represent clan ancestors (Lüning 2005; Petrasch 2012).

In spite of the evident differences, all these approaches agree that figurines are not epiphenomenal, passive items of material culture, to be admired from afar, but that they played an active role in society,

for instance in creating identity groups and maintaining long-distance links (e.g. Hansen 2007; Becker 2011: 347; Petrasch 2012). These interpretations are still quite varied, and indeed address different orders of questions as defined by Lesure (2011: 51; [Tab. 7.1](#)). Thus, they should be seen as complementary rather than exclusive approaches. However, this variability also begs the question of whether figurines always fulfilled the same range of functions and held the same range of meanings across LBK society and over time. After all, if they were central to discourses about categorisation, the body, or identity, we would expect them to be enstoried in a different way.

The notion of enstoriment or emplotment makes reference to the way in which elements of our lives – events, people, objects and so on – are combined into meaningful sets in peoples lived experience by reference to the goals and situations they are embedded in at the current moment (for further discussion of this concept, drawn originally from Ricoeur (1988), see e.g. Borić 2010; Ingold 2011: 161–64). This then orients and guides the ways such artefacts could be used in the future. Yet because artefacts, especially if they impinge on many aspects of life, can become embedded in alternative ways of shaping people's lives, their uses can come to differ over time and between contexts (see e.g. Hofmann 2013 in relation to the LBK house). Artefacts are not a static frame that will ensure the perpetuation of the status quo, but through new constellations in changing social contexts, they help us re-create, rather than replicate, our world (Jones 2007: 81–87). An artefact can be – and is – interpreted in multiple ways, and this creates fault lines, different ways in which “appropriate” uses are defined. Figurines, too, could have been contextualised in this way.

What is depicted

Any attempt at contextualising LBK figurines must face its own set of problems. To begin with, such items are not actually terribly frequent: Becker's (2011: 30) comprehensive study lists around 250. In addition, there are about 200 anthropomorphic pots, 46 anthropomorphic miniatures applied to pottery, 54 anthropomorphic pottery handles and 30 incised anthropomorphs, plus a few pieces made from bone. Only a few more examples have come to light in recent years (e.g. Zeeb-Lanz 2013; Becker and Dębiec 2014; Schwarzborg 2014). Overall, Becker (2011: 62–63) distinguishes type 1 figures with an unsegmented body (but an occasionally clearly modelled head) from type 2 figures with more clearly modelled arms, legs, heads, and torsi.

The latter can be standing or seated, and the positions of the arms and legs can vary. In turn, the anthropomorphic pots can be divided into so-called figurative pots, where the body of the vessel at the same time functions as the body of a figurine, and into pots which have either just a face under the rim (face pots) or only feet at the base (Becker 2011: 109–10). The overwhelming majority of all these items were discovered in secondary, discard contexts. To this can be added the generally fragmented state of figurines, which were most likely intentionally smashed (Becker 2011: 96–100). Many more pieces are surface finds. Overall, this sets limits for the spatial and temporal resolution our contextualisations can achieve.

In addition, the main characteristics of LBK figurines occasionally make even the basic level of iconographic interpretation quite challenging. For example, there are obvious problems with assigning a sex or gender to the figurines in Becker's catalogue (Becker 2011: 93ff). Of course, secondary characteristics, such as hairdos, ornaments or clothing and so on, could have been straightforward indicators for an LBK viewer, but they are not so for us. Limiting ourselves therefore to figurines with breasts and/or pubic triangle, and adopting relatively liberal criteria for inclusion in this category, a maximum of 31 figurines¹ and figure pots can be classed as female, to which can be added three gynaeomorph vessels. There is only one definite male, the famous "Adonis of Zschernitz" (Nebelsick *et al.* 2004). In general, LBK figurines are now interpreted as deliberately abstract, and this includes not just the scarcity of clearly sexed examples, but also a general tendency towards abbreviation and hybridity (e.g. Reinecke 1977: 207; Becker 2011: 347; Hofmann 2012).

In the LBK, the most abbreviated figurines, *i.e.* those reduced to barest essentials, are Becker's (2011: 62) type 1 figures with an unsegmented, round or flat body and head. Arms and legs, if marked at all, are relatively undifferentiated (Fig. 7.1b). However, even the more fully modelled type 2 figurines can be extremely schematic for instance in their facial features (Fig. 7.1c). Often, it is not even clear whether we are dealing with straightforward humans at all. Figures such as the head from Nieder-Eschbach, with its long-snouted face (Hampel 1989, see Fig. 7.2, left), or the human faces with horns so frequent in Austria (Lenneis 1995), mean that it is sometimes difficult to draw an exact line between what is a human and what is an animal representation. This is especially the case since zoomorphic depictions also exist (see Becker 2007 for an overview) and can be very difficult to distinguish from anthropomorphs, particularly when fragmented. Equally, the distinction between either anthropomorphs or zoomorphs

on the one hand and objects on the other is repeatedly blurred, notably with reference to pottery. There is a whole continuum, from anthropomorphs holding a pot, or being applied to the outside of one (as the example from Vedrovice, Fig. 7.1a), to anthropo- and zoomorphs functioning like vessels, such as the hollow figure from Immenhausen (Fig. 7.2, right; Kneipp 2001), to pots which are decorated with selected humanoid or animal-like features, such as “feet”, hands, or faces.

This fluidity also makes it difficult to fit LBK figurines into a two-dimensional scheme such as that proposed by Lesure (2011: fig. 37), in which the degree of abstraction is expressed by relative position on the y-axis, while different kinds of subject matter are arranged along the x-axis. For the LBK, all too often we are not sure what the subject matter actually is, or which aspect of hybrid items we should privilege. Instead, the relationship is probably better expressed in terms of a triangular field, with three main attracting poles – straightforward humans, animals, or containers – and plentiful gradations between (Fig. 7.2). This ambiguity was certainly not lost on the LBK makers and users of these figurines.

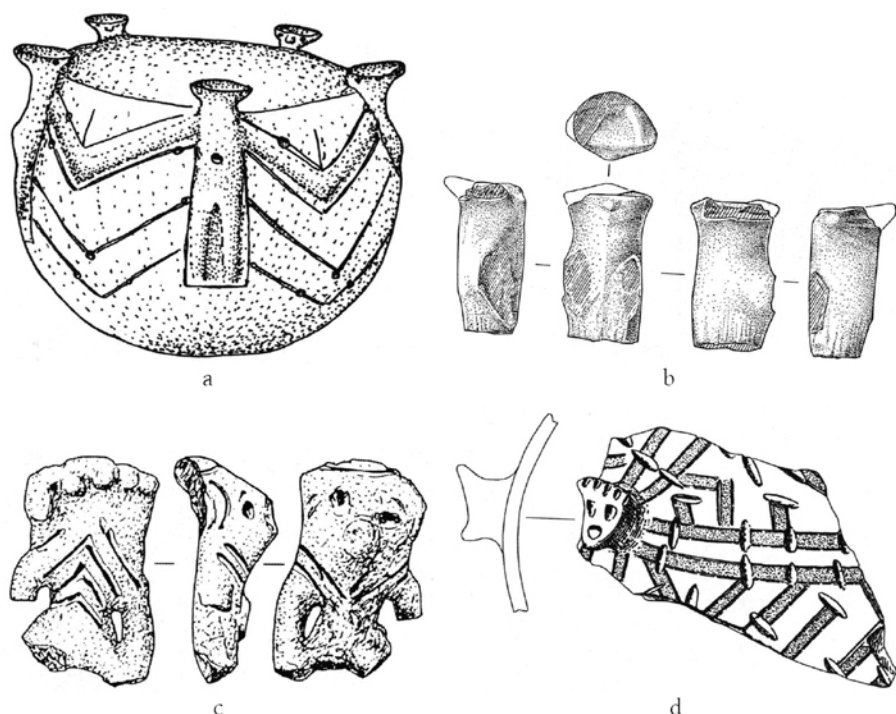


Figure 7.1: Selected figurative material from the LBK. a. Pot from Vedrovice, showing anthropomorphs with bowl-heads (from Becker 2011: plate 88.1; height c. 10 cm); b. abbreviated type 1 figurine with elongated head from Zilgendorf, Franconia (from Becker 2011: plate 4.1; height c. 5.5 cm); c. a type 2 figurine with schematic facial features from Bicske, Hungary (from Becker

Setting the question

This begs the question of which of Lesure's six approaches can be attempted as things currently stand. Iconography and its ambiguities will of course play into any analysis, but given Becker's (2011) recent classification this will not form the main focus here. Other approaches have been attempted, but while the overall chronological development, for instance, is now well understood, data on aspects such as use are still patchy. Here, I will attempt to expand on the "window on society" approach: what do figurines tell us about LBK social relations?

Previously, I have argued that the characteristics of figurines inform us about conceptions of the human body in the LBK, drawing parallels in particular to mortuary treatments and to the way LBK architecture and bodies interacted. However, these ideas work at a very general level of explanation, and have not been concerned with differentiating different kinds of bodies, such as those of children, young adults and the elderly, or those of different genders. The main point was instead to reveal basic trends, such as a concern with the transformation of substances and dissolution of boundaries. However, although basic attitudes may have been widely shared, there is no reason to believe that there was ever such a thing as "the" conception of the LBK body, especially given the strong tendency to regionalisation in almost every aspect of LBK life. This is the angle I explore here.

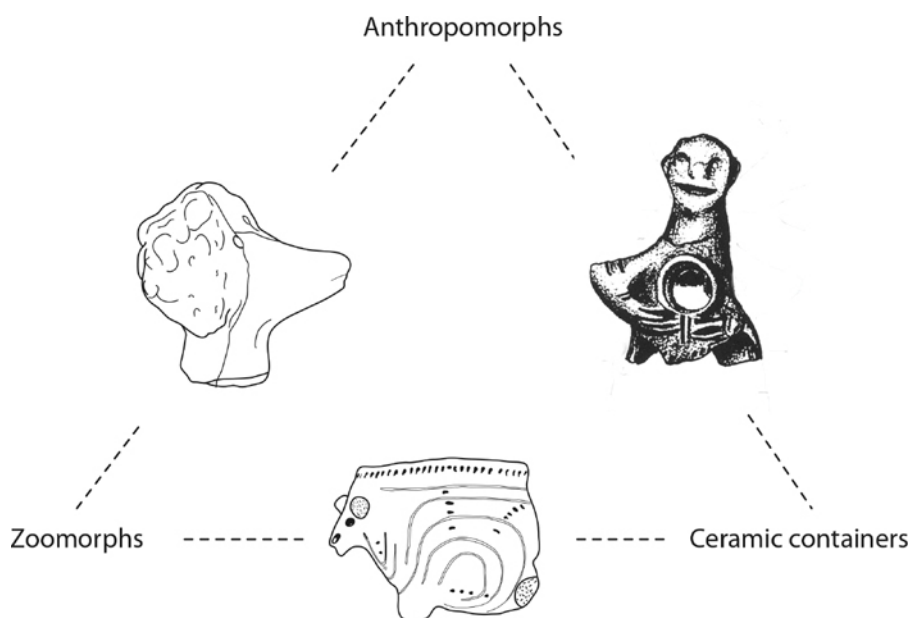


Figure 7.2: Schematic representation of the links between different kinds of figurines and artefacts. The head on the left is Nieder-Eschbach (c. 4 cm; after Hampel 1989: 151), the figure on the right is Immenhausen (height 6 cm; after Kneipp 2001: 37), the vessel at the bottom is the Hienheim cattle-pot (after Modderman 1977: 57).

In my initial choice of regions, I followed the main clusters of figurines as determined by Becker (2011): Hungary/Slovakia, Austria/Moravia, east Germany/Lower Saxony and the Rhine-Main area yielded most material (Fig. 7.3; Tab. 7.2) and hence became anchoring points, to which smaller assemblages like those from Baden-Württemberg, southern Bavaria or Bohemia could then be related. Initially, my main question was which correlation, if any, existed between the representation of the body in the grave, gendered lifeways, and representational choices in the figurine material.

Table 7.2: Simplified characteristics of the figurative material, cemetery and isotopic evidence for the regions discussed in the text. Core regions are in bold. Numbers of figurines include all figurative material (after data from Becker 2011)

	Hungary/ Slovakia	Austria	Bohemia	East Germany	Rhine-Main	Baden-Württemberg	Southern Bavaria
Figure frequency	High (n = 152)	High (n = 93)	Low (n = 19)	High (n = 92)	High (n = 155)	Low (n = 17)	Low (n = 22)
Sexed depictions	Low (4.6 %)	High (8.6 %)	High (10.5 %)	Medium (6.5 %)	Medium (6.5 %)	Absent	Absent
Figurative themes	faces and face pots	faces, anthropomorphised vessels	anthropomorphised vessels	more abbreviated figures; anthropomorphised pots	more abbreviated figures and hollow figures	few abbreviated figures; anthropomorphised vessels	few abbreviated figures; anthropomorphised vessels
Cemetery burial	absent	focus on personal ornamentation	absent	focus on pottery, low standardisation in body position	great variability across the region	low standardisation, comparatively few grave goods	focus on personal ornamentation
Isotopic data	greater male/female differences	greater male/female differences	no data	reduced male/female differences	reduced male/female differences	reduced male/female differences	reduced male/female differences

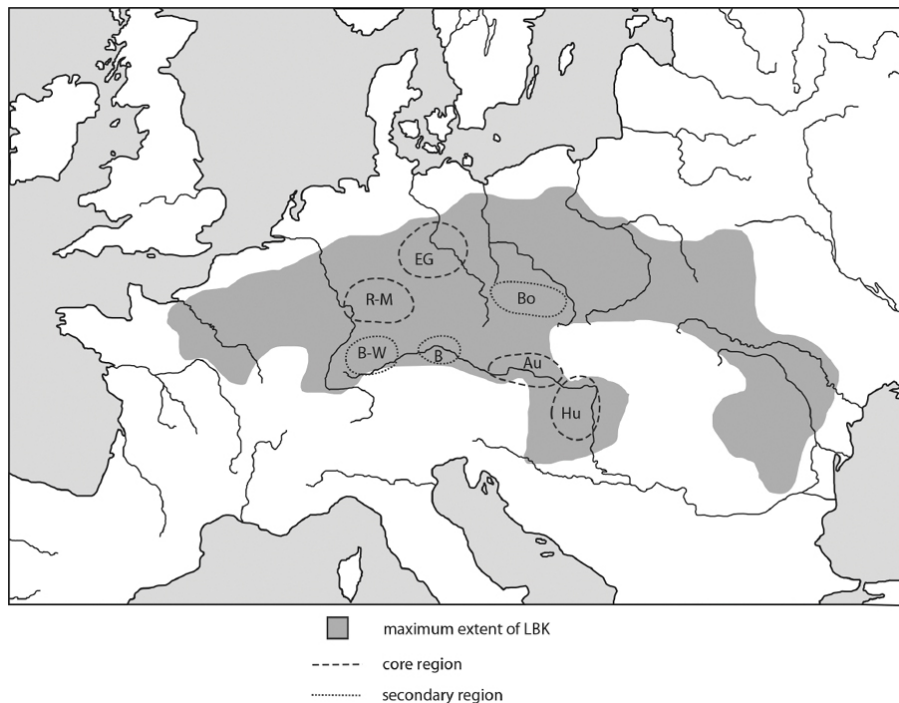


Figure 7.3: Map of regions discussed in the text. Core regions: R-M: Rhine-Main; EG: East Germany; Au: Austria; Hu: Hungary. Secondary regions: B-W: Baden-Württemberg; B: Bavaria; Bo: Bohemia (base map after Jeunesse 1997: 10).

Regional patterns

Expectations

Regionalisation has long been recognised as one key scale for diversity across all areas of LBK life, from artefact morphology to social structure (e.g. Modderman 1988; Jeunesse 1995; Coudart 1998; Pechtl 2015). In terms of burial practices, there is considerable diversity in how the body was treated and displayed (e.g. Jeunesse 1997; Hedges *et al.* 2013: 378–80; Hofmann 2015). What is less clear is what determined this variation. Thus, there are certain patterns at an LBK-wide scale, for example that polished stone axes almost always occur with males, but there are also aspects that differ regionally.² These can include the presence/absence of cemeteries, as well as frequencies in certain kinds of goods, notably again polished stone tools, but also the provision of ochre in powdered or nodule form or the inclusion of ornaments of various materials. The main differences for the regions treated in this paper are summarised in [Table 7.2](#).

Concerning gendered identity, recent isotopic investigations into LBK mobility and diet have revealed important new insights. Throughout the LBK, females showed more varied strontium isotope

signatures than males, interpreted as a patrilocal system of residence (Hedges *et al.* 2013: 391–92). This is coupled with slight, but noticeable differences in diet, with men generally consuming a little more animal protein. This pattern is not equally marked at all sites and is particularly prominent in Moravia (Hedges *et al.* 2013: 378). This corresponds well with an overall greater incidence of *cribra orbitalia* (likely related to iron deficiency anaemia) and caries for females, again particularly high in more easterly areas such as Hungary, Moravia and Lower Austria (Hedges *et al.* 2013: 395). These male-female differences are much slighter in Alsace or Bavaria (Hedges *et al.* 2009: 378) or in the sample from Herxheim, although here the multiple origins of the interred individuals must be taken into account (Dürrwächter *et al.* 2006: [fig. 4](#)). The sample from Nieder-Mörlen in Hesse is too small to draw reliable conclusions (Nehlich *et al.* 2009), but no sex-based differences were noticed in Saxony-Anhalt (Oelze *et al.* 2011). This means that across the area of the LBK's distribution, the embodied experience of being female did indeed differ.

In sum, there is potential to examine whether gendered experiences of mobility, health and diet, alongside regional differences in burial practices, were reflected in figurine making and use. One could for instance ask whether figurines are more frequently explicitly gendered in areas in which there were more marked differences between male and female lifeways, or whether figurine frequency correlates with the presentation of the body in death in some way, varying for example with the overall effort expended in decorating the body and displaying it in the grave.

The lack of pattern

Indeed, Becker's study already revealed regional differences in figurine tradition. To begin with, the overall frequency is uneven, with figurines rarest at the peripheries of the LBK (Paris Basin, Ukraine etc.), and distinct concentrations in the "anchoring regions" defined above (Becker 2011: 14). The gaps between these core regions can certainly not be explained by differences in research intensity, as they also affect well-documented areas such as Baden-Württemberg or Lower Bavaria. In what follows, I will briefly try to characterise the individual regions, relying on Becker's (2011) extensive catalogue. With a view to focusing on the continua between anthropomorphs, zoomorphs and vessels, type 1 abbreviated figures were distinguished from type 2 figures, with hollow figurative vessels as a subcategory. All pots enhanced by the addition of miniature anthropomorphs

(applied, incised) or by single body parts (mainly feet, faces and hands) were treated together in one category of “anthropomorphised pots”. Given the many ambiguities of the corpus, any classification into types can be no more than a general indication, but is the necessary first step in identifying basic preferences. The corresponding zoomorphic equivalents were also considered, based on the catalogue provided in Becker (2007).

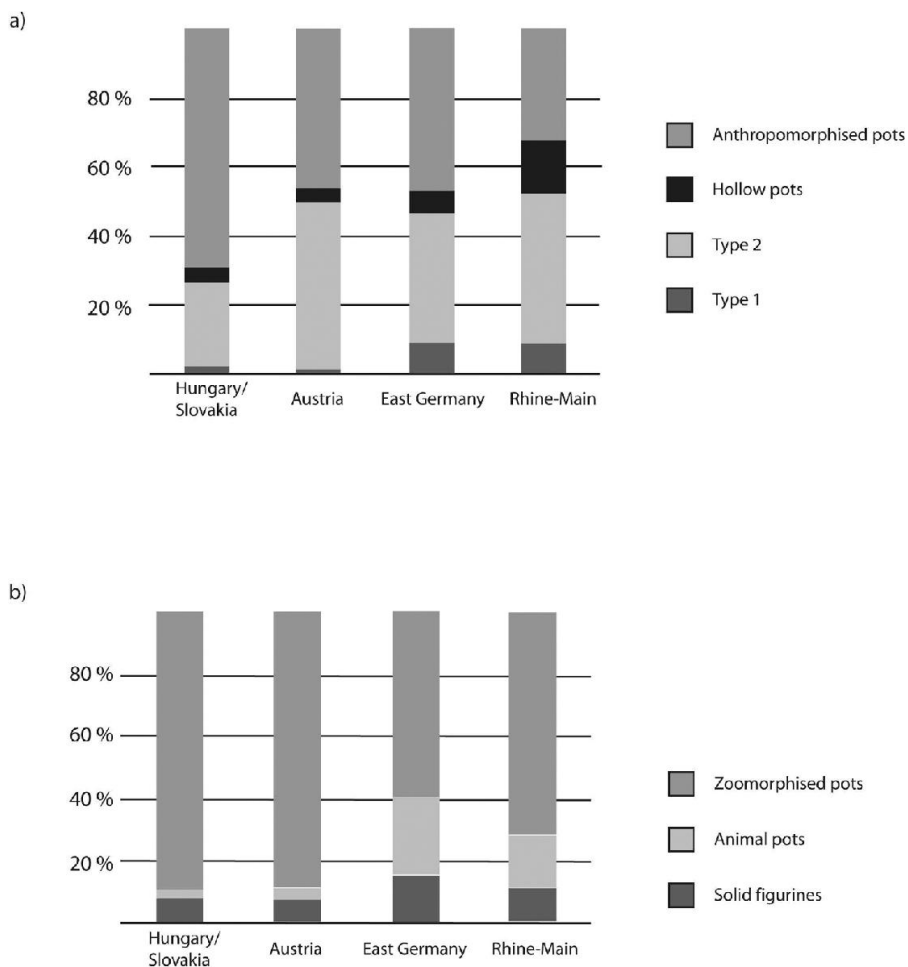


Figure 7.4: Comparison of regions by type of anthropomorph (a) and by type of zoomorph (b).

Comparing the relative frequency of figurine types across the regions (Fig. 7.4a), it is clear that type 1 figurines are very rare in the easternmost areas, Hungary/Slovakia and Austria/Moravia. Especially in the former case, anthropomorphised pots clearly dominate, a pattern already noted by Becker (2011: 107, 110, 117, 137). Of the 105 such vessels from Hungary/Slovakia, more than half (57) are face pots and a further 25 have handles in the shapes of faces. In Austria/

Moravia, the pattern is less marked, but still obvious: among the 43 anthropomorphised pots are 15 face pots and 11 face handles. Moving further west, the east Germany/Lower Saxony region has a similar proportion of anthropomorphised pots as Austria, but the application of heads and faces is less dominant; instead there is a peak of incised motifs, generally showing whole bodies in a stick-figure fashion (9 cases), and there are relatively more pots with feet (11 cases). There are also more type 1 figures than further east. The westernmost and largest assemblage, the Rhine-Main cluster, has comparatively few anthropomorphised pots, and there are no clear preferences in this group as to whether faces or feet are added (with 16 and 17 examples respectively). Interestingly, among the type 2 figures, around a quarter are hollow, a much greater proportion than elsewhere.

These patterns are to an extent mirrored in the zoomorphic material (Fig. 7.4b). In Hungary, 21 of the 37 animal figures are heads — sometimes recognisable as caprines or cattle — applied to pottery, and such applied heads also make up the majority of the Austrian cases (15 out of 27). This is no longer the case in eastern Germany, where feet applied to vessels are more frequent than heads. There are also more instances in which the whole pot functions as the animal's body, and more solid zoomorphs. The Rhine-Main area occupies an intermediate position: animal feet (23) and heads (23) applied to pots are a little more frequent than in eastern Germany, but there are still more solid figures and animal figurative pots than in Austria and Hungary.

There are other interesting differences, although the low number of cases urges caution. For example, for the frequency and type of decoration Becker (2011: 72–75) could show that the so-called “fir branch motif” (e.g. on the back of Fig. 7.1c) is most frequent in Lower Austria, Transdanubia and adjacent areas, while more idiosyncratic motifs and a greater attention to the arms and legs characterises the Elbe–Saale and Rhine–Main clusters. In Austria (3 cases), eastern Germany (4 cases) and the Rhine-Main area (5 cases), the face handles applied to pottery can be ambiguous as to whether their features are primarily human, animal, or indeed something else entirely. In Austria, anthropomorphic faces with horns further blur the boundary between human and animal. There are also instances in which the heads of whole figures applied to pottery are themselves shaped like small bowls, for instance at Vedrovice (Fig. 7.1a). This could be a play on the elongated heads sometimes found on type 2 anthropomorphs and which Lüning (2005) has interpreted as hats or headgear. The bowl-heads certainly suggest another interpretive possibility. Finally,

and virtually unique to Hungary, there are handles in the shape of a foot with modelled toes to which a face has been added, so that many examples can be read either way (Fig. 7.1d). The specifics of these visual ambiguities, riddles and puns are different in each region, and sometimes on a case by case basis. Yet overall, they are a further pointer that the visual strategies employed by LBK potters were often focused on ambiguity, hybridity and abstraction, rather than straightforward representation.

In sum, the relative focus on different kinds of representations seems to differ from east to west. In the east, containers take up a central place in the canon, and are variously embellished with faces under the rim – turning the whole vessel into a body – or with faces as handles. In addition, there is some visual punning or ambiguity with body parts merging into each other (as in the feet/faces) or becoming containers themselves (as in the bowls/heads). Instead, further west, particularly in the Rhine-Main area, the focus is on the whole body. There are still plays on the container/body metaphor, but they more frequently take the form of items which are primarily shaped as bodies, but take on some of the functions of containers, as in the hollow type 2 figurines.

Looking briefly at regions with fewer figurines, in Bohemia and north Moravia, 14 out of 19 anthropomorphs are anthropomorphised vessels. This high percentage is reminiscent of Hungary, and indeed this is the only other region with foot/face handles. However, much like in eastern Germany, incised stick figures play a larger part here. Animal heads as handles dominate among the seven zoomorphs. In southern Bavaria, the overall proportion of figurine types is very similar to Austria: there are few type 1 figures, but also few hollow type 2 ones. Among the anthropomorphised vessels (12 out of 22), however, whole applied torsi or incised figures are more frequent than representations of heads or faces. This also applies to Baden-Württemberg with its 17 examples; yet here, applied animal heads dominate the small zoomorphic sample (5 out of 10), while in southern Bavaria four out of nine zoomorphs are solid figures. Overall, then, most of these regions show similarities to neighbouring ones with more figurative material, but they are never exact replications. This could be due to the small sample size in these areas. However, the most significant difference certainly is that so few figurines were recovered.

Thus, there are some general trends, notably the focus on faces applied to pottery in the east, and the complete body in the west. Yet the pattern remains diffuse in detail. In particular, there is no

consistent association between trends in the representation of human and animal bodies across regions, although in each area there are ways in which these categories are transgressed. The lack of clear patterning remains when comparing the figurine patterns, such as they are, to funerary traditions and information about health, diet and mobility (Tab. 7.2). The regions in which gendered differences in diet and health are most marked (Hungary/Slovakia and Austria/Moravia) are also those with high numbers of figurines, but the data so far available for east Germany and the Rhine-Main area do not suggest that this correlation holds there. Nor, with the low number of sexed figurines overall, can we confidently state that femaleness is more explicitly depicted in areas in which female lifeways may have differed more strongly from male ones. There are also no consistent patterns that would connect the standardisation of body positions in the grave, the attention to specific kinds of grave goods (such as personal ornaments) and the kinds of burial places chosen (cemeteries or settlements) in any consistent way with either the frequency or the representational emphases of the figurative corpus. At first glance, all this seems a little disappointing. So where do we go from here? Why was the region not a fruitful unit of analysis in this instance?

Dealing with the lack of fit

One possibility is that figurines varied at other social scales, ones that remain hard to assess given the relative paucity of data. While the regional level has worked well for defining pottery traditions or flint trading networks, for example (e.g. Lefranc 2007: 26–30; Zimmermann 1995), there are also commonalities at larger scales as well as differences within regions (for pottery, see e.g. Pechtl 2015; for flint, see e.g. De Grooth 2016). For instance, differences in grave good provision or in the details of the ritual often work at smaller scales, for example creating differences between adjacent sites in a micro-region or between groups of graves on the same site (Hofmann and Bickle 2011; Hofmann in prep.). In the relatively large regions defined on the basis of figurine frequency, several trends can exist side by side. For example, there are very few burials from Hesse, and the cemeteries there have many unfurnished burials. In contrast, further north the large cemeteries of the Rhineland have yielded abundantly furnished graves, while the site of Herxheim is clearly anomalous in the human body treatments exhibited there (e.g. Boulestin *et al.* 2009) — yet all these examples are part of the Rhine-main cluster. So perhaps figurines, too, could vary at a micro-regional level or between adjacent sites.

One interesting strand in this context is the role of figurines in so-called “central places”. Thus, Kneipp (2001: 33) has noted that large and long-lived sites in Hesse tend to have a particularly rich finds spectrum with many imported items and a higher frequency of figurines. This pattern applies to excavated sites such as Nieder-Mörlen (Schade-Lindig 2002), but also to data from surface collections in other regions (e.g. Pieler 2010). The narrative Kneipp (2001) constructs is one in which central places did not only redistribute imported goods, but also served as religious centres. This would fit with the idea of figurines as clan ancestors (see above), and indeed Kneipp (2001: 41) suggests a “pantheon” of known divinities across the LBK, which played a role during religious festivals at central places.

This interpretation contextualises figurines with other patterns of material culture and certainly deserves to be checked against data from other areas where no central places have so far been suggested and/or their relationship to the putative “hinterland” remains less well known. However, there are also problems here, in that a very variable figurine corpus – one that includes recognisable characters alongside one-off pieces, tiny abstract figurines alongside large figurative vessels, and foot/faces alongside a diverse cast of zoomorphs – is interpreted with reference to just one function. Yet such details are important because figurines function very powerfully in close, intimate encounters.

For Bailey (2005: 26–44), the main impacts of figurines – their capacity to unsettle their users, or to alter their sense of time perception for example – are those that become activated through direct handling and personal engagement with the figure. It is also here that abstraction, hybridity and ambiguity unfold their full potential. They force the viewers to fill in the blanks, try to resolve the contradictions, figure out the puns etc. for themselves, leading to divergent and thus potentially subversive interpretations. Because of the cognitive “work” that has gone into them, such visual riddles are often better remembered and elicit increased emotional responses (Abed 1994; Bailey 2007; Tversky 2015). Through strategies such as the juxtaposition of items commonly kept separate, their transposition into a new context, exaggeration and distortion of features, disguise of certain elements or transformation through merging and hybridism, new interpretive spaces are opened up (Klein 2007: 17–19). In as far as these create paradox or irony, they can also include an element of humour (Klein 2014: 205).

Looking at figurines from this perspective, we can ask who the

makers and handlers would have been. If some figurines were clan ancestors, their association could be with the male sphere, given indications for patrilocality and descent in the male line (see above). However, it is difficult to appreciate how these items would have functioned in a mass public setting, where only few participants would have been close enough to appreciate what was depicted, let alone to handle the figurines. In this case, figurines could perhaps have reinforced dominant social narratives in an intimate sphere, where handling was limited to few people—either because access was restricted, or because the social setting of use was small, for instance a routine domestic one. This is not incompatible with increased figurine occurrence in so-called central places, where distinguishing oneself through a long genealogy and link to a founding ancestor may have been a useful social strategy, to be reinforced in private as well as in public.³

However, the clan ancestor hypothesis is strongly based on the few recognisable “characters” and hence only takes one part of the overall figurine body into account. Items such as the anthropomorphic handles are not easy to explain in this way, and indeed it is unclear whether all figurative material was restricted to special, out of the ordinary contexts. While this may apply to the rarer items, such as vessels with rows of applied three-dimensional anthropomorphs peeking into the pot (see discussion in Becker 2011: 341), phenomena such as foot-faces are perhaps easier to see as surprising, maybe irreverent puns encountered in an everyday setting. Accepting for the moment that pottery may have been produced mostly by women, these kinds of items need not have been reverent or apotropaic, but could have been a humorous commentary on the sanctioned discourse surrounding male and female bodies, their perceived capabilities and their mutability.

In this sense, LBK figurines are perhaps ambiguous objects in the sense of D. Battaglia (1997: 210–13). Although her case study is the gifting of axe blades in modern-day New Guinea, she stresses that wherever objects elicit an ambiguous response, for instance by transgressing culturally defined categories, two different processes can spring into action: either efforts at disambiguation and integration, or attempts to purposefully maintain ambivalence, resist clarity and thus shift the balance of power. These latter, Battaglia suggests, may be particularly pertinent in situations in with an imbalance of power, where those generally perceived to wield less influence or authority can use these fault lines as subversive commentary. Although at this stage, this proposition is no more or less likely than any other, it is

attractive to see LBK figurines as a possible vehicle for resistance in this way.

Figurine stories

Overall, then, at a very general level, figurines do fit conceptions of the human body in the LBK as also expressed in burial treatment: their surfaces are decorated and they often fall into repetitive postures, but at the same time they stress ambiguity, fluid boundaries between human, animal and object, and body fragmentation. Yet below this general scale, things get rather murkier. Trying to compare different ways in which LBK figurines could have been contextualised threw up few consistent patterns. Apart from a privileging of the container metaphor further east and a greater focus on anthropomorphic bodies (sometimes hollow) further west, the frequency of figurines and the specific representational choices did not correlate with the presentation of the body in death, or with indications we currently have for gendered differences in lifeways. The region, at least as things currently stand, was not a productive scale at which to investigate figurine contextualisation.

In a final, more speculative section, I have argued, following Bailey and others, that the reason why figurines do not neatly fit into patterns at this level is because their greatest potential for differential enstoriment unfolds at the level of the individual encounter. This potential can be normative, driving dominant discourses home in intimate settings, but can also be unsettling, disquieting and subversive. We currently cannot decide whether figurines functioned as the hallowed images of ancestors, as humorous puns or as vehicles of resistance, and as these are far from being the only possibilities we should not insist on a single interpretation. Figurines, figurative vessels and anthropomorphised pots were indeterminate, and thus held the potential to question boundaries, challenge power relations and draw attention to life's ruptures and faultlines. They do not fit into any single, unitary cultural master plan because in the LBK, that is quite simply not their point.

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¹The figure given in Becker (2011: 93) is 35 % of type 2 figures for which it is theoretically possible to determine sex (i.e. with preserved torso, n = 70). The figures quoted here also include figurative pots, gynaeomorphs and so on.

²This summary is based on a database of almost 3300 LBK burials, assembled during a Leverhulme Early Careers fellowship at Oxford University.

³Although other, less reverent explanations for the widespread similarities between figurines from faraway regions are possible, such as their identification as tricksters or culture heroes.

Chapter 8

Post-LBK anthropomorphic vessels from Poland

Joanna Pyzel

Introduction: Poland after the LBK

The Linear Pottery Culture (*Linearbandkeramik*, henceforth LBK) was the first Neolithic culture in Poland. The first farmers occupied only the most fertile loess areas of Southern Poland (Lesser Poland and Silesia) and similarly attractive enclaves of good soils on the Polish Lowland, including Kuyavia, the Chełmno-Land and Pyrzyce (Pyritz).

The end of this culture in Poland at about 5000–4900 BC is, like in many other regions, a very controversial topic. Except for Lower Silesia, where the Stroked Pottery Culture (*Stichbandkeramik*, henceforth SBK) originates immediately after the LBK (see Kulczycka-Leciejewiczowa 2006 and further references therein), the development in other regions does not fit in the cultural patterns worked out for the other side of the Carpathians. For this reason, independent and contradictory hypotheses about the development of these areas after the LBK have existed so far. The traditional one is based on the premise that “peripheries” culturally depend on creative “centres” on the Danube and the Tisza; hence it interprets the situation in the study areas as a hiatus terminated by the migration of new inhabitants from the South. An alternative hypothesis is that there was settlement continuity after the LBK and that local cultures peculiar to the area developed there, influenced only to some extent by impulses from the Lengyel-, Polgar and the SBK cultures. Taxonomic chaos is the result of this research situation: many, often competing expressions of cultures and cultural groups co-exist. A prime example is Kuyavia, where the denominations SBK and Brześć-Kujawski Group of the Lengyel Culture are used on the one hand (see Grygiel 2008) and on the other hand the Late Band Pottery Culture I and II–III respectively

(Czerniak 1980; 1994) or recently the Late Band Pottery Culture and the succeeding Brześć-Kujawski Group (Czerniak 2012). The situation in Lesser Poland is even more complex due to the long and rich research tradition, as for example the Lublin-Volhynian Culture alone had at least a dozen different denominations (Zakościelna 2006: 77). For the purpose of this paper, I apply the cultural taxonomy by Kadrow and Zakościelna 2000 (also see Czekaj-Zastawny *et al.* 2009 and Kaczanowska 2006), where the Malice Culture descended from and replaced the LBK (Kadrow 2006). In the Copper Age, it is followed by the succeeding Lublin-Volhynian Culture (Zakościelna 2006).

Table 8.1: Simplified taxonomy and chronology of post-BK Danubian cultures from Poland

	Lower Silesia	Western Lesser Poland	Lesser Poland	Kuyavia
5000 BC	SBK I	LBK Zeliezowce	LBK Zeliezowce	LBK
	SBK	Samborzec-Opatów	Malice Culture	LBPC (post-LBK I)
	L-PC I	Malice Culture		
4500 BC	L-PC II	Pleszów		
		Modlnica		
		Wyciąże-Złotniki		
4000 BC				

This general scenario can be applied for almost the whole of Lesser Poland. Only in its western part, in the vicinity of Cracow, many local groups are still distinguished, which can be explained on the one hand by the special role of the city of Cracow as a strong and old academic centre; on the other hand, it can also be due to the real peculiarity of this region, for example, the fact that it had important raw material resources: Jurassic flint and salt. This might be the explanation for the direct strong influences from the South in the Pleszów-Modlnica Group (Lengyel Culture) and Wyciąże-Złotniki Group (Bodrogresztur Culture). The origin of the oldest Samborzec-Opatów Group is more complex, because of its syncretic character, connecting elements of the Lengyel Culture, Herpalý Group and SBK (Kaczanowska and Kozłowski 2006). Nevertheless, even neither the Pleszów-Modlnica nor the Wyciąże-Złotniki Group can be interpreted as pure Lengyel or Polgar settlement enclaves of Cracow.

In Silesia, after the time of the SBK, the influences from the Lengyel Culture and later to some extent the Polgar Culture became stronger, although the insufficient state of research results in different and complicated cultural denominations as well (see Kamieńska and Kozłowski 1990). For the purpose of this paper, I adopt the latest scheme of K. Czarniak, who distinguishes for Silesia different phases of the so called Lengyel-Polgar Culture (LPC; Czarniak 2012). The

chronological sequence is represented in [Table 8.1](#).

Anthropomorphic vessels of the post-LBK in Poland

Anthropomorphic vessels of the post-LBK in Poland are very rare. For the time period of more than a millennium we have registered so far only 19 finds of this kind. A complete list is included at the end of this paper.

We should distinguish between real anthropomorphic vessels – *i.e.* pots with plastic elements of the human body constituting their morphological parts – and “ordinary” vessel forms with human representations (incised, stroked, painted or plastic, whole or fragmentary) on them. The group of real anthropomorphic vessels consists of four finds: one of which belongs to the Samborzec-Opatów Group from Kraków Nowa Huta-Mogiła 62a ([Fig. 8.1](#)), another one to the Malice Culture from Kraków-Wyciąże 5 and two vessels to the Lublin-Volhynian Culture from Złota Grodzisko I ([Fig. 8.2](#)) and II. The first two are very schematic. In Mogiła 62a only two knobs can be interpreted as arm depictions, and a rounded and slantwise ending rim represents a head. In Wyciąże 5 only two arms extended forward are displayed on an otherwise quite ordinary vessel. The finds from Złota resemble figurines which are hollow inside, but the better preserved one has a rim instead of a head above the arms.

The eight representations of a complete human body are connected with two cultures: stroked ones with the SBK, one from the early phase in Stary Zamek 2a in Silesia ([Fig. 8.3](#)) and three (one of them incised-punctuated) from the late phase (also called the Late Band Pottery Culture) in Bodzia 1 in Kuyavia. All belong to the category of the so called *Krötendarstellungen* typical for this culture (Quitta 1957). The latter four finds from Targowisko 11 ([Fig. 8.4](#)), 12–13, 14–15 and Bolechowice 4 are dated to the early Malice Culture and are made of plastic bands and knobs placed on the shoulder of quite large vessels. The amphora from Targowisko 11 is complete; other pot forms and human depictions are preserved only fragmentarily.

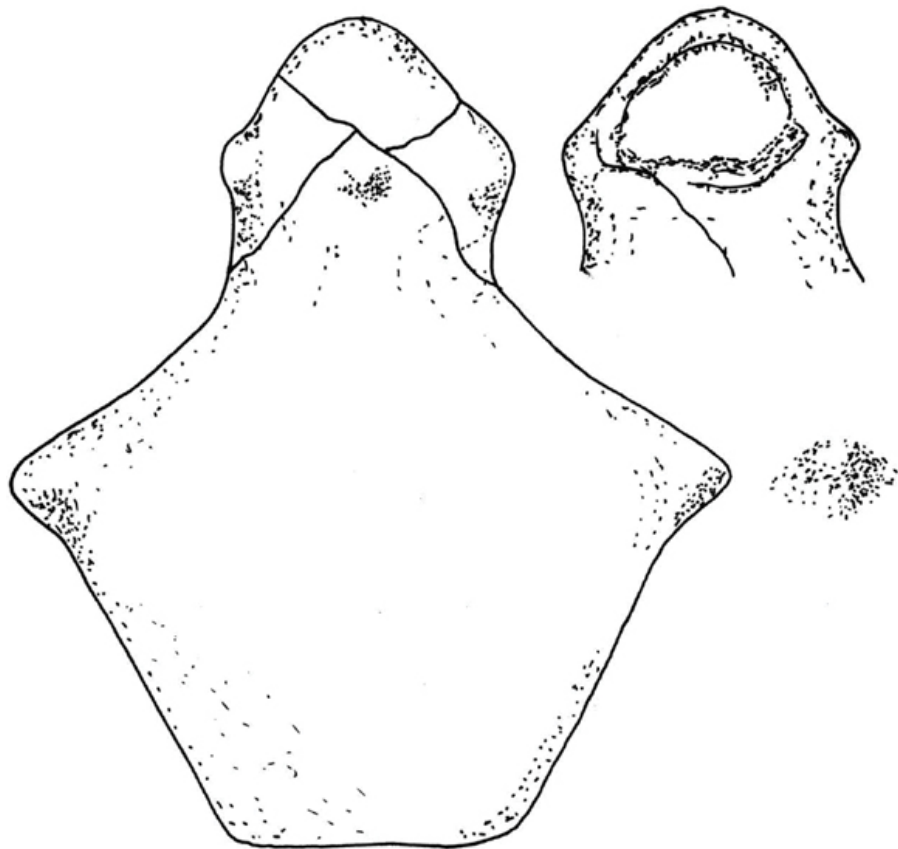


Figure 8.1: Kraków Nowa Huta-Mogiła, site 62a. Anthropomorphic vessel, Samborzec-Opatów Group (after Kamieńska and Kozłowski 1990: tab. 4:8; drawing not to scale).

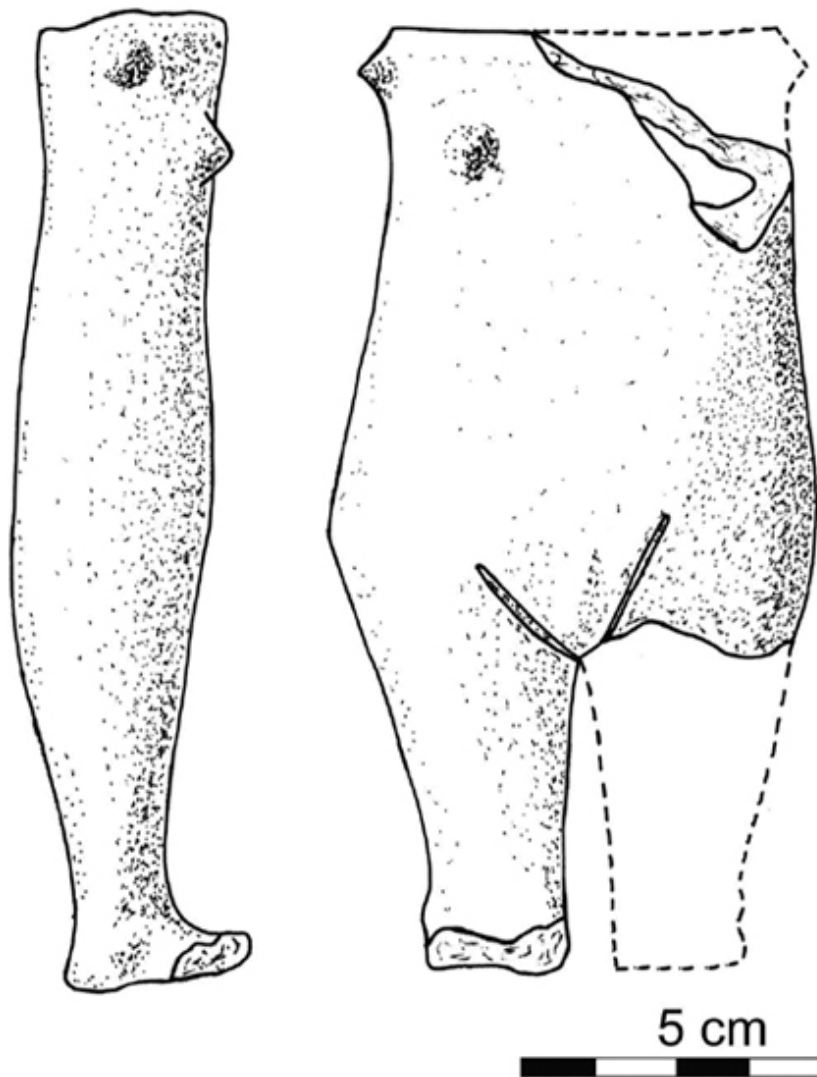


Figure 8.2: Złota Grodzisko I, distr. Samborzec. Anthropomorphic vessel/female figurine hollow inside, Lublin-Volhynian culture (after Podkowińska 1953: tab. XVIII:1).

The find from Las Stocki, dated to the Lublin-Volhynian Culture, may be a variation of such representations. It is a flat human figurine that was probably placed on a vessel rim. Four finds represent only parts of a human body. These are three breast depictions: from Kuczkowo 5 in Kuyavia, dated to the SBK (Late Band Pottery Culture) and Kraków Nowa Huta-Pleszów 17 (Fig. 8.5) and Modlnica 5, both Lesser Poland and dated to the Pleszów-Modlnica Group. The breasts from Kuczkowo 5 and Pleszów 17 are pushed out from the inside, while in Modlnica 5 these are knobs attached to the vessel body. The find from Modlnica 5 is too small to allow the reconstruction of the

part of the vessel it was placed on, while in Kuczkowo 5 the breasts were placed on the neck and in Pleszów 17 probably on the shoulder. In Dąbrowa 3 plastic buttocks attached to a vessel's body were discovered. It is a stray find from a survey so its dating to the "Lengyel Culture" is not certain (Zastawny 2008).

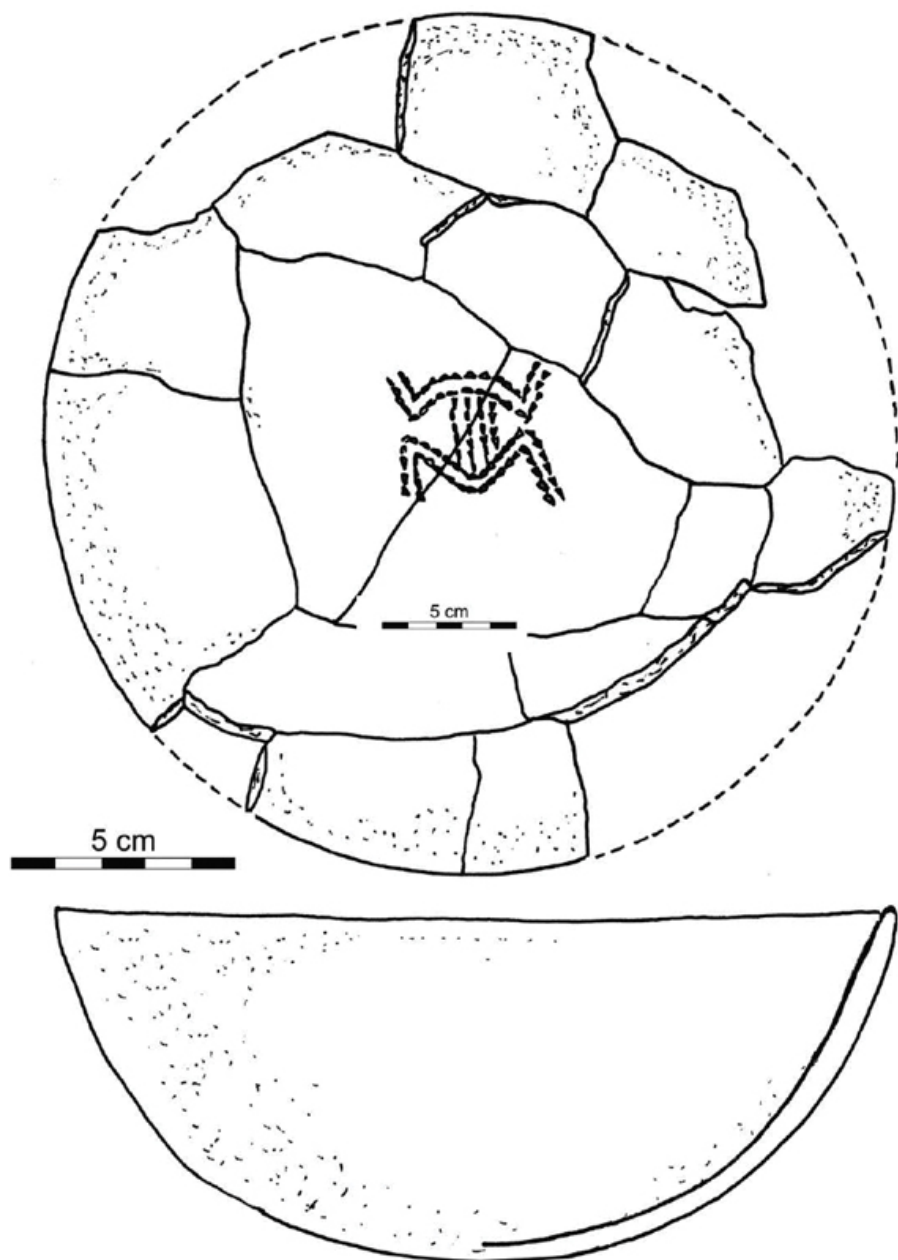


Figure 8.3: Stary Zamek, site 2a, distr. Sobótka. Bowl with stoked human depiction inside, SBK (after Romanow 1977: 51, fig. 20).

The last two finds belong to a category of human feet or legs carrying a vessel's body. The pot from Zarzyca in Silesia is dated to LPC IIb1 and represents four separate human feet with a vessel placed on them. Its upper part is not preserved. Podłęże 17 dated to the Wyciąże-Złotniki Group yielded a vessel fragment consisting of three pairs of legs (the missing fourth one was not found) bound together to a hollow pedestal (Fig. 8.6). The upper part of the vessel is not preserved either.

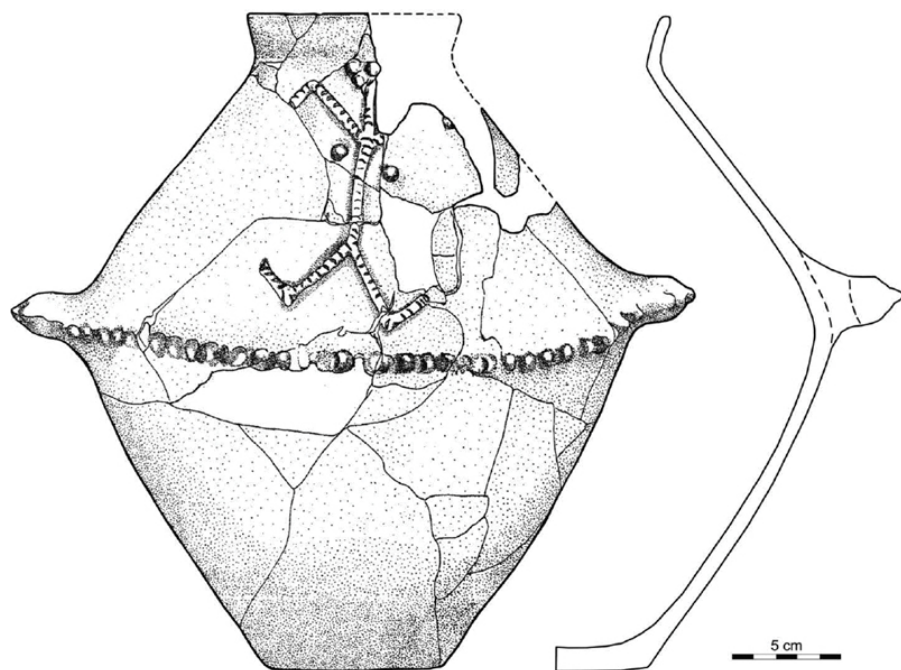


Figure 8.4: Targowisko, site 11, distr. Kłaj. Amphora with anthropomorphic decoration, Malice culture (after Grabowska and Zastawny 2008: 72, [fig. 3](#)).

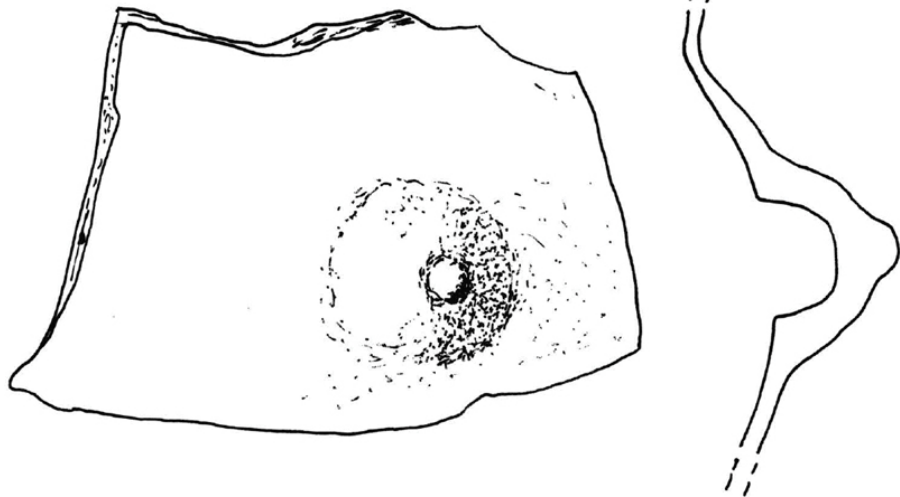


Figure 8.5: Kraków Nowa Huta-Pleszów, site 17. Vessels fragment with breast-shaped knobs, Pleszów-Modlnica Group (after Kaczanowska 2006: 46, fig. 5:4; drawing not to scale).

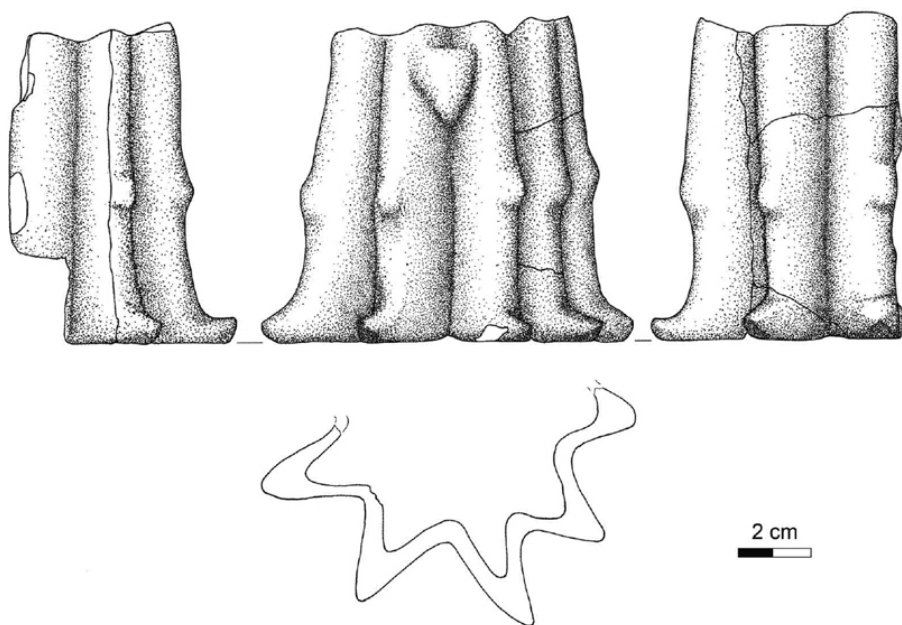


Figure 8.6: Podłęże, site 17, distr. Niepołomice. Fragment of a pedestaled anthropomorphic vessel, Wyciąże-Złotniki group (after Nowak et al. 2008: 87, fig. 3).

Only very few of these vessels were preserved well enough to allow the reconstruction of the complete form. These are anthropomorphic vessels from Mogiła 62a (Fig. 8.1), Wyciąże 5 and Złota Grodzisko I (Fig. 8.2). Almost complete is also a bowl with a human depiction from Stary Zamek 2a (Fig. 8.3) and the amphora from Targowisko 11

(Fig. 8.4). In all other cases, we do not know if the recorded human representations are complete and what the complete form really looked like. Additionally, finds from Zarzyca, Las Stocki and Złota clearly demonstrate problems connected with the identification of anthropomorphic vessels. Las Stocki was preliminarily interpreted as a figurine. A singular leg from the pot in Zarzyca, if found without other fragments, would probably have been included in this category as well. Similarly, the vessel fragment from Złota Grodzisko II without the comparable find from Złota Grodzisko I would probably have been interpreted as a figurine as well. Moreover, we do not know which unspecific, heavy fragmented sherds could have belonged to an anthropomorphic vessel. All these circumstances make the study of anthropomorphic vessels even more difficult. Nevertheless, their very small number is a real fact.

All human representations as vessels or as depictions on their surface are very schematic and confined to very few traits:

Legs

Legs are depicted in Stry Zamek 2a (Fig. 8.3), Bodzia 1, Targowisko 11 (Fig. 8.4), Targowisko 12–13, 14–15, Zarzyca, Złota Grodzisko I (Fig. 8.2) and II and Podłęże 17 (Fig. 8.6). In all cases apart from Stry Zamek and Bodzia, legs have feet (in Podłęże even interpreted as shoes), in Podłęże also knees are highlighted. The anthropomorphic vessels from Mogiła 62a and Wyciąże 5 have ordinary pottery bases instead of legs.

Arms

Arms are depicted either in the form of lines (Stry Zamek 2a, Bodzia 1, Targowisko 11, 12–13, 14–15) or knobs: rounded (Złota Grodzisko I) or elongated (Las Stocki, Mogiła 62a). In Wyciąże 5 the vessel's body is modified to represent two arms extended forward. Interestingly an ornament of small cuts located horizontally on the carination continues on the arms as well.

Heads

Heads are always very schematic without any facial features. In Targowisko 11 it is represented by three (originally five) round knobs (Fig. 8.4). In a similar human representation from Targowisko 12–13, however, the plastic band embodying the person is only slightly thicker at the upper end. A similar schematic expression can be observed in Las Stocki. In Mogiła 62a three knobs are placed on the vessel's neck, representing the head; two of them may be depictions of

ears (Fig. 8.1). The vessel from Złota Grodzisko I has no head but a rim directly above the arms instead (Fig. 8.2). The human figures from Sary Zamek 2a (Fig. 8.3) and Bodzia 1 are unquestionably intentionally headless.

Breasts

Apart from three vessel fragments with only one attached breast (Pleszów 17, fig. 5, Modlnica 5 and Kuczkowo 5) breasts are depicted as small knobs in Złota Grodzisko I (Fig. 8.2) and Targowisko 11 (Fig. 8.4). In the latter case, they are put not directly on the torso but separately on both sides of it.

Genitalia

A vagina in the form of a triangle is depicted in Podłęże 17 (but only on one pair of legs; Fig. 8.6), Złota Grodzisko I (Fig. 8.2) and Las Stocki. The vessel fragment from Złota Grodzisko II is a male representation with a knob as a penis.

Other features

The buttocks from Dąbrowa 3 are an exceptional find. Also, the navel of the male depiction from Złota Grodzisko II has no analogies in post-LBK Poland.

Most of the anthropomorphic vessels were found fragmented and had been deposited with other “ordinary” refuse in settlement pits. The pedestal from Podłęże 17 comes from a ditch enclosing the settlement. The feature 219 from Mogiła 62a was primarily interpreted as a human grave where the bones were, as usual in this region, not preserved (Godłowska 1976; Kamieńska and Kozłowski 1990: 22–23). In spite of the fact that the complete anthropomorphic vessel was found together with three other pots and a boar’s fang, M. Kaczanowska questions such a classification of this feature (Kaczanowska and Tunia 2009: 278).

The amphora from Targowisko 11 is also complete. It was found in a large pit assemblage with many other artefacts, also dated to the LBK. In the publication, no special function has been suggested (Grabowska and Zastawny 2014).

Discussion

Special finds of this particular kind have been the favourite topic of culture-historical archaeology, which still has a strong impact in Poland. Such artefacts are best suited to trace even very remote connections and influences (recently Zalai-Gaál 2009). For many of

the vessels presented here such analysis has been done. Apart from the human representations from Stary Zamek 2a and Bodzia 1, which are typical for the SBK, all other artefacts, however, cannot be so easily fitted into existing typologies of the Lengyel and Polgar Cultures of this time. In the case of the human depictions and the pedestal from Podłęże 17 from the Malice Culture their uniqueness has been even literally pointed out (Grabowska and Zastawny 2007; 2008; 2014; Nowak *et al.* 2008).

Apart from the question of their formal origin or inspiration there are also topics influenced by the post-processual archaeologies that may be inspired by the interpretation of anthropomorphic vessels. Especially the archaeology of the body and the materiality theory can help us to consider what they meant to the societies who made and used them in the Neolithic.

Anthropomorphic vessels are very often included in the study of human figurines, which received much more attention. Basically it is correct, as they are linked by both the subject and material (clay). Human depictions on the vessels can even be treated as figurines placed on pots, but anthropomorphic vessels as such deserve special attention.

The finds from the post-LBK Poland differ from the figurines in the fact that the vessels do not represent the whole human body. The only exceptions are here the artefacts from Żłota Grodzisko I and II. Their similarity with figurines has already been pointed out and it clearly demonstrates that the division between these two artefact categories was not necessarily as sharp as we archaeologists would like to believe. However, apart from Żłota, which I will for now leave aside, all other vessels represent only some selected features of the human body: in Wyciąże 5 only arms, in Mogiła 62a arms and a head. We can suppose that also the leg-vessels from Podłęże 17 and Zarzyca and maybe even breast-vessels from Pleszów 17, Modlnica 5 and Kuczkowo 5 belonged to this category as well. It seems like the general idea was not to represent a whole human body in a naturalistic, though very schematic, way, as was the case for figurines (and figurine-like vessels of the Żłota type). Some vessels represent a kind of hybrid-creature: in Mogiła 62a the head could be an animal one as well, in Zarzyca four legs are presented, and in Podłęże 17 even four pairs of legs. Such human-animal substitution and transformation is common in the Neolithic (Bánffy 2001; Miracle and Borić 2008; Naumov 2008, 2011).

All these artefacts remained quite ordinary vessels; their form was not so much influenced by the presence of these human elements. It

seems like the parts of the human body only emphasised the pot's shape.

Human depictions on the pots of the SBK and the Malice Culture did not influence the vessel's morphology either, but humans are represented completely or almost completely, albeit in a very schematic form. One depiction from Bodzia 1 with an additional third pair of limbs (?) can actually be interpreted as a hybrid or even zoomorphic creature (see Czerniak 2012a). The figures from Stary Zamek 2a and Bodzia 1 are intentionally headless, which is typical for the SBK (see Quitta 1957; Soudský and Pavlů 1966). It is suggested for this culture that its most typical vessel ornaments also are schematic representations of humans (Spatz 2003). The plastic depictions of the Malice Culture are similar in the manner of human representation. The decoration technique and the vessel form is different. Typical for the SBK are either very schematic humans on pear-form vessels or small figures on the bottom of bowls. In the Malice Culture the human depictions were placed on the shoulder of quite large amphorae. These representations have heads and in the case of Targowisko 11 also breasts.

The question of gender was often considered in the discussions of human representations in the Neolithic, especially for figurines, but also anthropomorphic vessels. An extremely strong impact came especially from the idea of the Mother Goddess and the interpretation of human representations as emblems of fertility and pregnancy (Gimbutas 1974; 1989). Now a great deal of new research increasingly points out that many representations were intentionally left ungendered (see Hamilton 2000), which is the case for some finds from the post-LBK Poland as well (Mogiła 62a, Wyciąże 5, Stary Zamek 2a and Bodzia 1, maybe Targowisko 12–13 and 14–15). In the recent studies on Catalhöyük figurines C. Nakamura and L. Meskell interpret them not as a symbol of fertility but maturity (Nakamura and Meskell 2009). G. Naumov, however, indicates in a paper on anthropomorphic vessels from the Neolithic Balkans their mainly female character (Naumov 2008). D. Bailey thinks that such debates are only suggestions and not explanations and as such not meaningful (Bailey 2008). Taking the figurines of the Hamangia Culture as an example, he demonstrates how these artefacts saturated Hamangia communities with particular images and senses of being human. He emphasises their homogeneity within a particular group and time. At first glance finds from Poland are anything but homogeneous. But they do, indeed, share a common idea. It is an idea of a body as a container. The latent isomorphism between pots and bodies has been

stressed by many authors (see Borić *et al.* 2013). The pot-body metaphor plays a crucial part in the interpretation of face pots from the Scandinavian Neolithic by Ch. Tilley (1996). C. Gamble addresses this issue at a much larger scale, discussing corporeality as the source of the metaphorical relationships. The category of containers he distinguishes is not limited to the pottery and includes also pits, houses, graves, masks etc. These material metaphors are rooted in the Palaeolithic but the pottery is a special container which can embody people's social networks (Gamble 2007). C. Knappett, L. Malafouris and P. Tomkins believe, however, that pottery vessels and clay figurines of the Neolithic exemplify "a new way of thinking about the body" (Knappett *et al.* 2010: 584). Adopting the embodied mind and conceptual metaphor theory they claim that "containers are not simply vessels but action possibilities that bring forth new forms of mediated action, agency, and material engagement, both in terms of use and manufacture" (Knappett *et al.* 2010: 585). On the example of a single pot they demonstrate the complex mixing of ontological correspondences and possible metaphors objectified by it. These embodied meanings were certainly subjective and shifted through time so the desire to find a single key to understanding all Neolithic anthropomorphic vessels is definitely pointless. Even for the time period and study area of this paper, apart from a very general common idea of a vessel-human connection, significant differences can be observed. Intrinsically very inhomogeneous, human depictions occur on various kinds of vessels: open and closed, small and large, their context varying from whole vessels to tiny fragments deposited in several types of features, testifying that their meaning must have been different as well.

The small number of human depictions from the post-LBK Poland is striking in comparison to other "Danubian" regions of this time. Especially the Lengyel Culture is known for its huge volume of figurines and vessels (Zalai-Gaál 2009): alone in Těšetice-Kyjovice 286 figurines, 6 anthropomorphic vessels and 3 pots with human motives have been recorded (Podborský 1985). The contemporary, relatively small Pleszów-Modlnica Group with the strongest Lengyel Culture influences have indeed the statistically highest number of such finds in the post-LBK Poland, but not nearly as many as in the south. In the Copper Age of the Carpathian Basin, when the pottery lost its special position in favour of other prestige goods that expressed prestige and identity (see Parkinson 2006), figurines and anthropomorphic vessels were not produced any more. Some of the finds from Poland presented here are dated to this time, however. These are a small figurine-like

attachment from Las Stocki, the unique pedestal from Podłęże 17 and two figurine-like vessels from Złota. Especially the latter, idiosyncratic artefacts are a very distant transformation of the common vessel as a body idea. All the earlier finds, although rare, do fit very well in their time (see Hodder 2013) and testify to the common “Danubian” heritage of local, post-LBK communities in Poland.

Although so much has already been written on anthropomorphic vessels in archaeology, the subject is definitely not exhausted and the future of research seems very promising. The multi-disciplinary, holistic approach, combining high scientific methods (for example isotope analysis, faunal analysis and bioarchaeology – see the integration of the “imaged body” and “physical body” by Pearson and Meskell 2015) and new theoretical perspectives can provide fresh impetus for future research.

Antropomorphic vessels of the post-LBK cultures in Poland

Bohdzia, site 1, distr. Lubanie: fragments of three bowls with human decoration: two stroked and one incised-punctuated; settlement, features B501, E301, F208; SBK/Late Band Pottery Culture (Czerniak 2012a).

Bolechowice, site 4, distr. Zabierzów: fragment of vessel with anthropomorphic decoration; Malice Culture; unpublished (mentioned at Grabowska and Zastawny 2014: 284).

Dąbrowa, site 3, distr. Kłaj: fragment of anthropomorphic vessels with buttock application; survey find; probably Lengyel Culture (Zastawny 2008: 60, fig. 5).

Kraków Nowa Huta-Mogiła, site 62a: anthropomorphic vessel with schematic depiction of arms and a head; settlement, feature 219, probably a grave; Samborzec-Opatów Group (Kamieńska and Kozłowski 1990, tab. 4.8).

Kraków Nowa Huta-Pleszów, site 17: two vessel fragments with breast-shaped knobs; settlement, feature 426; Pleszów-Modlnica Group (Kaczanowska 2006: 46, fig. 5.4, 129).

Kraków-Wyciąże, site. 5; anthropomorphic vessel with schematic depiction of arms; stray find; probably Malice Culture; unpublished (https://www.ma.krakow.pl/x/zdjecie/1919/oddzial_Nowa_Huta/pradzieje/neolit).

Kuczkowo, site 5, distr. Zakrzewo: fragment of anthropomorphic vessel with breast decoration on neck; settlement find; SBK/Late Band Pottery Culture; unpublished (mentioned at Czerniak 1998: 33, fig. 18).

Las Stocki, site 7, distr. Końskowola: fragment of female figurine/rim application; settlement, topsoil find; Lublin-Volhynian Culture (Zakościelna 1986: 36, fig. 5).

Modlnica, site 5, distr. Wielka Wieś: two pottery sherds with breast-shaped knobs; settlement, feature 788 and secondary deposit; Pleszów-Modlnica Group (Grabowska and Zastawny 2011: 103, ryc. 9.b, c).

Podłęże, site 17, distr. Niepołomice: fragment of pedestaled vessel on four pairs of human legs; ditch enclosure; Wyciąże-Złotniki Group (Nowak *et al.* 2007: 461, fig. 9; Nowak *et al.* 2008).

Stary Zamek, site 2a, distr. Sobótka: bowl with stroked human depiction inside; settlement feature connected with house 1; SBK, phase III (Romanow 1977: 51, fig. 20).

Targowisko, site 11, distr. Kłaj: amphora with anthropomorphic decoration; settlement, feature 2823; Malice Culture (Grabowska and Zastawny 2007; 2008; 2014: 280–85).

Targowisko, site 12–13, distr. Kłaj: six fragments of vessels with anthropomorphic applications; settlement, features 294, 299, 783, 1978, 2680, 3461; Malice Culture (Czerniak *et al.* 2006: 735, fig. 17; Czerniak *et al.* 2007: 476, fig. 5; Czerniak *et al.* 2012).

Targowisko, site 14–15, distr. Kłaj: two fragments of vessels with anthropomorphic application; settlement, feature 67; Malice Culture (Czerniak *et al.* 2007: 476, fig. 5;

- Czarniak *et al.* 2012a).
- Zarzyca, site 6, distr. Kondratowice: fragment of vessel on four human legs; settlement feature; LPC, phase IIb1 (Prus 1990; Czarniak 2012: 135, fig. 40h).
- Złota Grodzisko I, distr. Samborzec: anthropomorphic vessel/female figurine hollow inside; settlement, feature 46a; Lublin-Volhynian Culture (Podkowińska 1953: 17, tab. XVIII.1, XIX.2).
- Złota Grodzisko II, distr. Samborzec: fragment of anthropomorphic vessel/male figurine hollow inside; settlement, feature 75; Lublin-Volhynian Culture; (Podkowińska 1953, tab. XIX.1).

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Chapter 9

Clay anthropomorphous images of the Jomon Period, Japan

Elena Solovyeva

Pottery is almost always one of the most typical features of any archaeological culture. Researchers usually have a quite clear idea of the ceramic vessels of Yanshao, China, and Cucuteni-Trypillian pots, Eastern Europe. The ceramics of ancient Japan are no exception.

The Jomon Culture is famous first of all because of its fascinating vessels. The Jomon period in Japan can be correlated with the Neolithic period in Europe. But its chronology is rather different. Usually the Jomon period is divided into six stages: 1. Incipient Jomon: 14000–11000 BC; 2. Early Jomon: 11000–7000 BC; 3. Initial Jomon: 7000–5500 BC; 4. Middle Jomon: 5500–4500 BC; 5. Late Jomon: 4500–3000 BC; 6. Final Jomon: 3000–2500 BC (Kobayashi *et al.* 2004).

The most widespread types of archaeological objects during the Jomon period are shell mounds, and the most famous artifacts are ceramic vessels and clay figurines. Certainly, the widely-known so called “flamed vessels” draw everybody’s attention due to their originality, harmony and some magic beauty (Fig. 9.1). Some of them bear the status of “national treasure” in Japan. Within the very long history of research some types of clay figurines, *dogu*, were defined, such as the “snow goggles” type, the “mimizuku owl” type, but also mountain-shaped, slab-like, heart-shaped types etc. (Egami 1973; Nagamine 1986). Some of the clay figurines have ornaments and features similar to those on vessels.

The Neolithic is considered a period of important changes in the life of ancient people, a time of developing systematic ideas of the world and the beginning of mythology. That is why detailed studies of art objects including faced vessels are so important. Pottery production is

closely connected with the first forms of collective representations and ancient mythology. This fact could be an explanation for the different decorative motifs and the deep ideological sense of ceramics in general.



Figure 9.1: Flamed vessel, Tokyo National museum (author's photo).

Among the Jomon vessels there is another group, not so well-known or not common but interesting for scientists: face vessels. This group is small but quite representative. The middle stage of the Jomon Culture was the so-called Golden Age of Jomon, so many vessels unearthed belong to this stage.

An interesting Middle Jomon vessel with the motif of a human figure was found at the site of Wadai, Fukushima prefecture ([Fig. 9.2](#)). As a relief, a quite abstract long-bodied human figure with long arched arms was placed on the pot's surface among the curving clay cords and cord marks. The triangular face features simply-made eyes, nose and mouth. The decorative motifs are typical for the Middle Jomon period, but the human figure is very rare. This vessel may have been used not only for everyday life but for some ritual functions, maybe for preparing food for supernatural beings.

In Middle Jomon times, some vessels with convex anthropomorphic figures were found. One of them is a jar-shaped vessel from the site of Hayashi Oji, Kanagawa prefecture (Fig. 9.3.1). This vessel has a rim with some holes below which could have been used for attaching a skin cover for cooking or for using it as a drum. Such a form of a pot's body could provide a good sound. A human-like figure, very close to a *dogu*, was placed on the vessel's belly. It has three fingers and is considered to be dancing. The figure is accompanying the spiral-shaped decoration. Applied pointed decoration could demonstrate the ritual function of this vessel.



Figure 9.2: Vessel from Wadai (Tatsuya 2009).



1



2

Figure 9.3: Vessels from Hayashi Oji (1) and Kaido (2) (Miho Museum 2012; Kaner, Bailey 2009).

A further Middle Jomon vessel was found at the site of Kaido, Nagano prefecture (Fig. 9.3.2). The surface of the vessel is covered with cord marks and the handle is shaped in the form of a human head. The size of the face is quite big for this vessel. Usually the faces on such vessels are turned inwards, looking into the vessel. A face looking outwards is rare. This face is child-like and has an interesting look, with an upturned nose and eyes slanting upward. These face details are similar to *dogu* faces in Middle Jomon.

A Middle Jomon lamp-vessel from the Sori site, Nagano prefecture, belongs to a special type of artefacts (Fig. 9.4.1). This vessel was used as a lamp and has the remains of a wick on the bottom. The upper part has three large holes. The main hole is decorated with three parallel incised lines and an attached human-like head looking inwards. The back side is modelled three-dimensionally so that the two other holes look like eyes and the central part between them could be considered as a nose. This vessel could have two anthropomorphic faces and may have been used in ritual practice.

A Middle Jomon cooking vessel from the site of Oohinohara, Kanagawa prefecture, has a *dogu* attached to its rim (Fig. 9.4.2). This vessel with a slender body and a widening mouth is decorated with cord marks and spirals. The attached figurine is looking inside it and may be guarding the cooking process. Placing a *dogu* figurine on the rim of the vessel demonstrates its ritual function.

A Late Jomon vessel from the Ogata site, Aomori prefecture, is part of a certain group of vessels with a round body (Fig. 9.5.1). This jar consists of a globular body, a cylindrical neck and a human-like head with two faces. The faces have noses, mouths, eyes and eyebrows. The surface is decorated with geometric patterns. The jar has only two small openings so its function could be ritual.



Figure 9.4: Vessels from Sori (1–2) and Oohinohara (3) (Miho Museum 2012).



Figure 9.5: Vessels from Ogata (1) and Fukuda (2) (Kaner, Bailey 2009).

The Late Jomon vessel from the Fukuda shell mound, Ibaraki prefecture, has a globular body decorated with cord marks and an

attached human-like head (Fig. 9.5.2). The facial features – nose, mouth, eyes and eyebrows – are similar to those on *dogu*. On the back side of the head is a hole, on the front side was a spout.

A Late Jomon long-necked jar from Tokoshinai, Aomori prefecture, is decorated with cord marks and a human figure. The figure has long curved arms, a round face with nose, eyes and eyebrows and mouth. Such a type of face is typical for *dogu* faces of the late Jomon phase. The jar's special decoration demonstrates its ritual function. The *dogu* in a seated pose from Nomotetai, Aomori prefecture, looks like a detail from this vessel (Fig. 9.6).

A deep pot from the Bamba Omuroyama site, Saitama prefecture (Fig. 9.7), is typical for Final Jomon pottery. The anthropomorphic mask placed on its surface is heart-shaped. The eyebrows are made as one line connected with the nose. The mouth is larger than the eyes. It is notable that the area for the ornamentation is limited by a special line. All details of the face are emphasised with dots. Such a face form – heart-shaped – is well known in the Russian Far East.

The *Dogu*-shaped Final Jomon vessel from Nakayashiki, Kanagawa prefecture, belongs to a very special group of vessels (Fig. 9.8.1). Such vessels were used as bone containers. The pot mentioned here contained the bones of a stillborn child. This jar has the shape of a human body with short arms, breasts and a face with an open mouth and incised tattoo-like lines. Probably the child's bones were placed into a jar as a symbol for a mother's womb in a special ceremony.



Figure 9.6: Vessel from Tokoshinai and dogu from Nomotetai (Miho Museum 2012).



Figure 9.7: Vessel from Bamba (Kaner, Bailey 2009).



1



2

Figure 9.8: Vessels from Nakayashiki (1) and Koshigoe (2) (Miho Museum 2012).

The Final Jomon *dogu*-shaped vessel from Koshigoe Fuchinoue, Nagano prefecture, had an infant's bones inside as well (Fig. 9.8.2). This vessel has short arms, a round face with a round mouth and big eyes, but is manufactured without breasts and other woman's features, in contrast to the Nakayashiki jar.

There are some other vessels that could be considered as face vessels or humanised pottery because of their decorations and other features. The typical details of “snow goggles” *dogu* (Fig. 9.9.1) are well-known and can be easily recognised. A Late Jomon vessel from the Tohoku University Archaeological museum (Fig. 9.9.2) and a Late Jomon vessel from the Yamagata Center for Cultural properties (Fig. 9.9.3) could be considered as similar to “snow goggles” with respect to their decoration.

Pottery vessels are very similar to human representations. A vessel in general can be correlated with the human body. First of all, the names of the vessel's parts demonstrate this fact – body, neck, mouth etc. The Jomon period pottery features a special group of vessels that can be interpreted as face vessels. Face vessels are tightly connected with *dogu* clay figurines and were used in ritual practice. Some types of vessels and their decoration could give us new types of humanised pottery.



Figure 9.9: Dogu with snow goggles (1) late Jomon vessels (2–3) (Tokyo National Museum, Tohoku University Archaeological museum and Yamagata Center for Cultural properties; author's photo).

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Chapter 10

Vessels decorated with stylised “pillar-like” anthropomorphic representations from the Precucuteni settlement of Baia-În Muchie (Suceava county, Romania), 2012–2014

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Constantin Aparaschivei*

Introduction

Anthropomorphic-shaped ceramic vessels or vessels decorated with stylised anthropomorphic representations are relatively rare in Precucuteni–Tripolye A area, with much of the discoveries dating from phase III in the culture’s evolution (a selective bibliography: Бибииков 1953: fig. 7.26, tabs 47.a, 57, 59.z, 73.a; Vulpe 1957: 107 fig. 79.5; Черниш 1959: tabs 7, 10, 13; Маркевич 1970: fig. 14.1; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974a: fig. 84/3.6; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1981: fig. 90.7–9, 120, 1.a–b, 2.a–b, 3.a–b; Бурдо and Відейко 1985: figs 3.12, 3.17; Збенович 1989: figs 51.12, 63.2, 70.9; Бурдо 1989: figs 4.11, 5.10, 8.27; Бурдо 2004: 388; Ursulescu *et al.* 2005: fig. 10.a–d). In most cases, the anthropomorphism is depicted through portraying a relief-shaped/plastic human figure on the surface of the vessel. A rare exception is a vessel from Ruseștii Noi I where the anthropomorphic figures were depicted through the design of the decorum itself.

In 1994, after researching two of the ceramic pots discovered at Slobodka Zapadnaia and Timkovo, Dmitri Ia. Teleghin identifies a new type of anthropomorphic decorum – stylised representations of “a goddess with the face of a snake ... guardian of the Tripolyan grain storage vessels” (Fig. 10.8.6–7). The author also mentions a similar

clay pot (Fig. 10.8.1), which was discovered at Traian-Dealul Viei (Dumitrescu and Dumitrescu 1968: figs 11, 12), pointing out that this particular vessel is much more stylised than the other two (Телегин 1994: 74). Throughout our research, we identified some other ceramic fragments (Fig. 10.1) depicting stylised goddesses at Trudești-Ghigoiești: Fig. 10.8.3 (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974a: fig. 39.9); Alexandrovka: Fig. 10.8.2 (Burdo 2011: fig. 5.4); Slobodka Zapadnaia: Fig. 10.8.4 (Burdo 2011: fig. 5.1); and Florești I: Fig. 10.8.5 (Пасек 1960: рис. 91a).

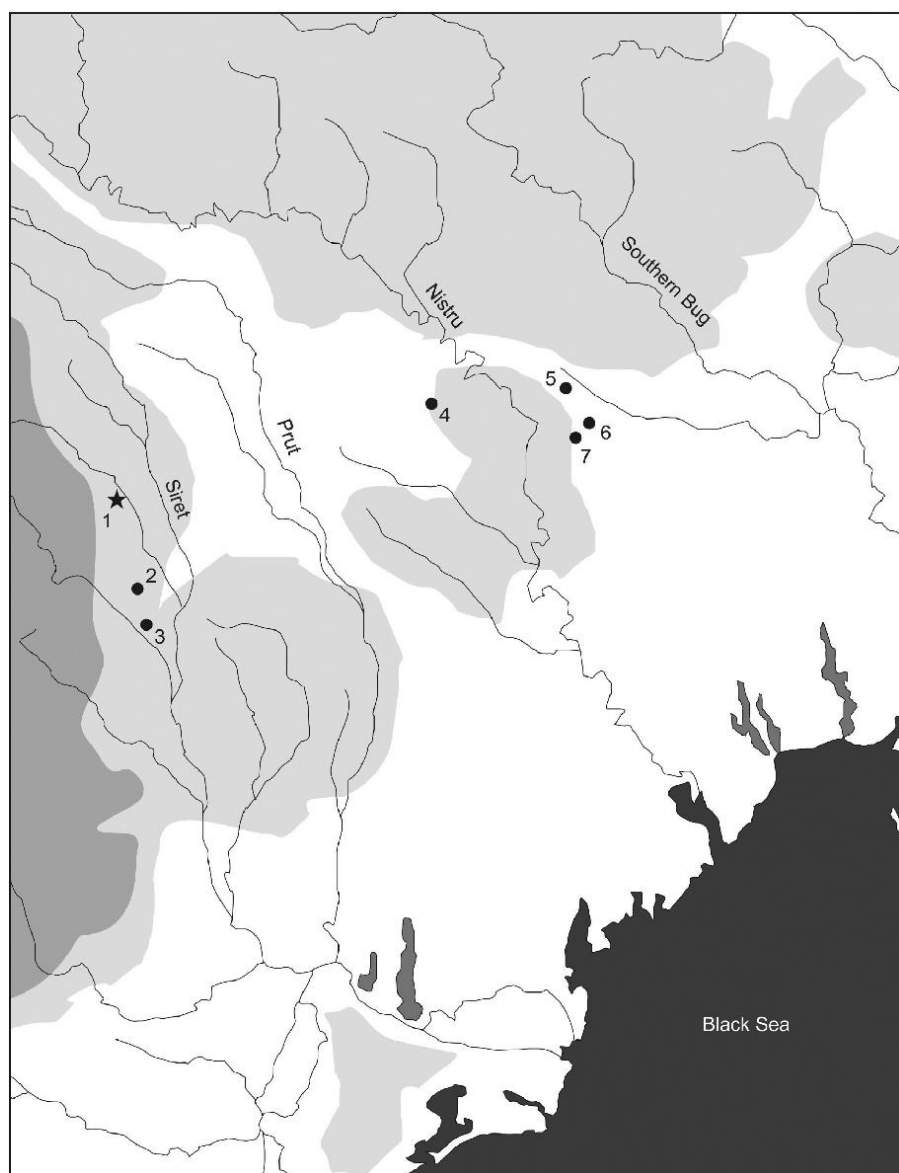


Figure 10.1: Distribution of Precucuteni-Tripolie A sites with vessels with stylised pillar-like

From 2012 to 2014, a team from the Museum of Bucovina (Suceava, Romania) conducted archaeological excavations of the multilayered site Baia-În Muchie (Suceava county, Romania)¹. The excavated area comprised 524,37 sq m. Four dwellings were partly or completely investigated (L1/2012, L2/2012, L3/2013, L4/2013) along with pits, ceramic concentrations, fireplaces and other archaeological complexes. Among these (Fig. 10.2) is the dwelling L3/2013 with a complex architecture, foundation trenches and the area of burnt debris of at least 11 × 22.5 m – the largest Precucuteni-Tripolye A building known so far (Ursu and Țerna 2014, 2015; Ypcy and Церна 2015). The settlement should be roughly dated at the end of the 6th–5th millennia BC according to relative chronology (¹⁴C dates shall be obtained in the future).

The excavations yielded a large number of whole and broken ceramic vessels and ceramic fragments similar to those studied by Dmitri Ia. Teleghin. The study of the context of their discovery combined with a detailed analysis of those vessels is able to reveal new information on the possible purpose of this type of archaeological objects as well as on the spiritual life of Precucuteni-Tripolye A communities.

The main scope of this article is to give a brief presentation of this specific type of vessels from Baia, discovered in 2012–2014. It should be stated from the very beginning that we do not agree that these particular depictions represent snake-goddesses. That is why, henceforth, we will refer to them as stylised “pillar-like” anthropomorphic representations.

Vessels from Baia – quantity and context

In the archaeological campaigns from 2012 to 2014, a total of 12 complete/restored and 56 fragments from different vessels with pillar-like anthropomorphic representations were discovered in Baia. Therefore, the complete number of separate vessels, complete or represented by fragments, rises to 68 (Table 10.1). The vessels mostly come from three dwellings and two features. We should mention that all of the Precucuteni dwellings were partly affected by later archaeological complexes which could remove some of the finds, eventually including other vessels or ceramic fragments of this type.

We now will present the context of the discoveries (Fig. 10.3). Most of the vessels and fragments come from the inventory of the dwellings with the large dwelling L3/2013 displaying also the largest number of

items. An important concentration of such finds (three complete vessels and several fragments) was recorded in feature 9/2014 (massive agglomeration of pottery and stone implements), situated near dwelling L3/2013, on its eastern side, at the same stratigraphical level as the dwelling. Regarding the distribution of finds within the dwelling contours, it should be mentioned that in building L1/2012 the vessels and their fragments build a clear concentration by the north-western side. On the other hand, vessels from dwelling L3/2013 seem to spread regularly across the complete surface of the building, with some gaps caused by activities from later periods. Anyway, the final conclusions about the distribution of the inventory in the large building 3 will be made after finishing the excavation of this unique burnt clay construction.



Figure 10.2: Partial plan of Copper Age features from Baia-În Muchie (excavations of 2012–2014).

Table 10.1: Vessels with pillar-like anthropomorphic representations from Baia, 2012–2014 campaigns

<i>Context</i>	<i>Complete/restored vessels</i>	<i>Fragments (from different vessels)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Building L1/2012	5	13	
Building L2/2012	1	0	
Building L3/2013	3	30	
Feature 3/2012	0	1	
Feature 3/2012 + building L1/2012	0	2(1)	
Feature 9/2014	3	9	
Total	12	56	68

Noteworthy is also the distribution of two fragments from the same vessel, found in dwelling L1/2012 and feature 3/2012 (agglomeration of pottery and broken grinding stones) with an interdistance of c. 5.5 m. Finally, a separate ceramic fragment was discovered at a considerable distance from dwelling L3, in a later archaeological complex.

Vessels from Baia – description²

The complete and restored vessels have a height of 10.5–48.5 cm and a maximal diameter of 12.4–51 cm. The pots have been made out of clay of different types with a mixture of fine sand, ceramoclasts and, sometimes, gravel in the ceramic paste. The vessels were hand-shaped and engobed prior to decoration; some of them display burnishing of the outer surface. All of the pots were burnt in an incomplete oxidising atmosphere, revealing also traces of secondary burning.

All of the vessels discovered so far belong to one single type: tronconical pot with emphasised shoulder and straight high rim. This particular type is pretty rare for Precucuteni–Tripolye A ceramic assemblage. The decoration is always arranged tectonically within three or four longitudinal metopes. Some of the vessels were encrusted with white paste made out of crushed bones, according to preliminary chemical analysis.

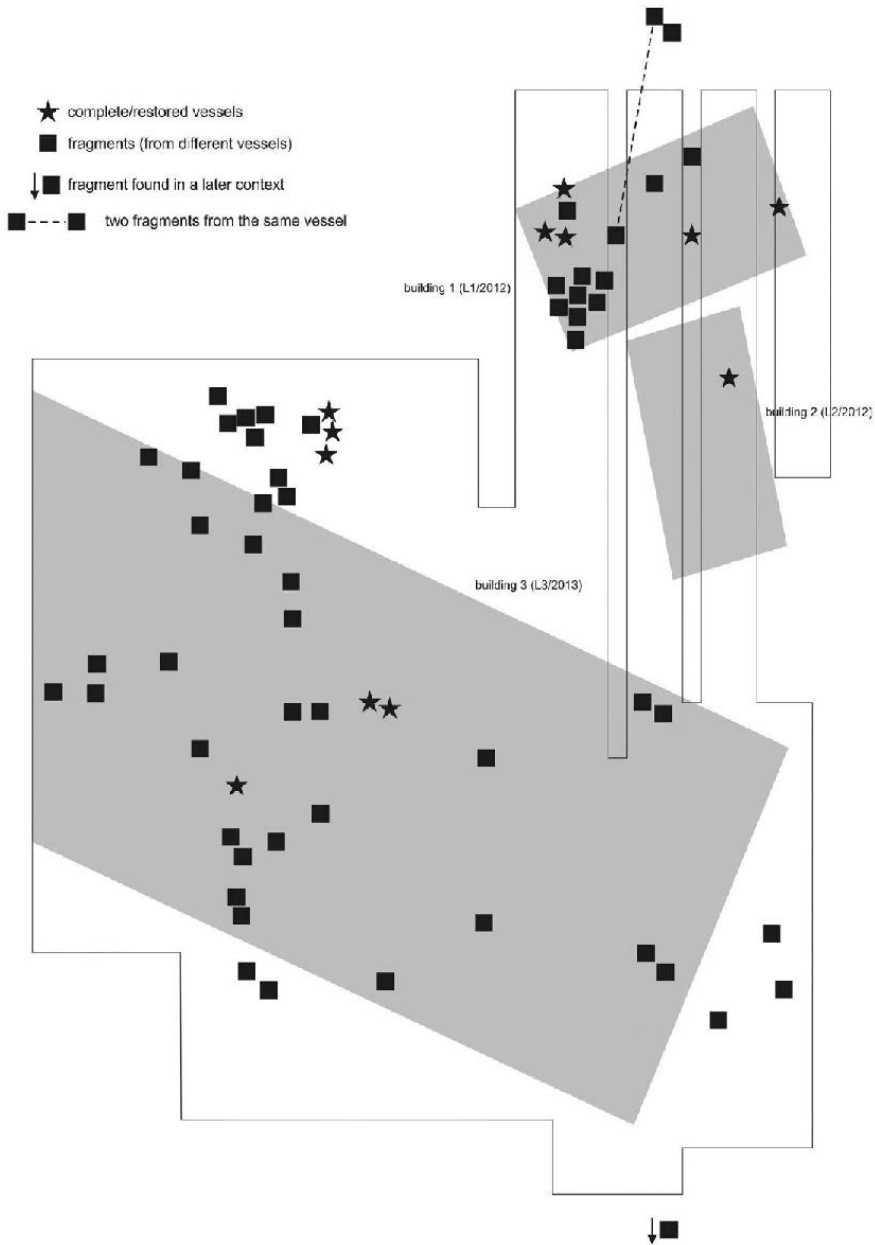


Figure 10.3: Schematic plan of contours of Copper Age dwellings with the distribution of complete/restored vessels and vessel fragments with stylised pillar-like anthropomorphic representations from Baia-În Muchie.

Table 10.2: Volumes of complete/restored vessels

<i>Site</i>	<i>Figure</i>	<i>Liquid volume (litres)</i>	<i>Wheat volume, 14% moisture content (kg)</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Traian Dealul Viei	8/1	25	18.75	
Baia	4/1	0.5	0.37	
Baia	4/2	15	11.25	
Baia	5/1	32	24	vessel deformed after secondary burning
Baia	5/2	27	20	vessel deformed after secondary burning
Baia	6/2	14	9	
Baia	6/3	5	3.75	
Timkovo	8/7	75	56.25	
Slobodka Zapadnaia	8/6	80	60	

The volumes of the complete ceramic vessels, measured in litres, for liquids, and in kilograms, for wheat (with 14% moisture content as for optimum storage), are measured as follows (for comparison we added to the vessels from Baia also the calculations for several finds from other sites – cf. [Table 10.2](#)).

Rims are always straight, with either no decoration or with vertical groups of short incised/excised lines. Shoulders bear a complex incised/excised decoration consisting of several patterns: angular apexes with short lines and triangles; meander extremities with apexes; isolated meander extremities resembling a “cup with handles and foot” of “menorah” type; concentric half-circles; angular and circular motifs resembling a variety of signs – zoomorphical representations (?), interconnected couples of dancers (?), two interconnected plows (? – for a similar depiction of plow see Черныш 1982: 233 fig. 18), head accessories (?); relief applications.

The ornamentation of bodies of vessels is structured into three or four vertical registers marked by the pillar-like “silhouettes” of the anthropomorphic representations. Between these, angular meanders are situated, marking the arms and separating the registers ([Fig. 10.5.1–2](#); [Fig. 10.7.1–9](#)). In some cases, these meanders display excised apexes. In one case, the right arm has an opened hand, realistically depicted ([Fig. 10.4.2.a–c](#)).

Description of anthropomorphic representations from Baia

The heads of the anthropomorphic representations are very stylised, depicted with: excised triangles at the extremities of the “silhouette”; two concentric half-ovals with the exterior one having split endpoints with two triangles; three short lines on top of which two other angular lines are placed, under this composition there are other three parallel

lines arranged so that they would probably outline the head and neck of the representation; two half-circles, extremities pointing up, each of them ending with one or two dots; groups of lines ending with excised triangles which are located near two half-ovals with extremities pointing up.

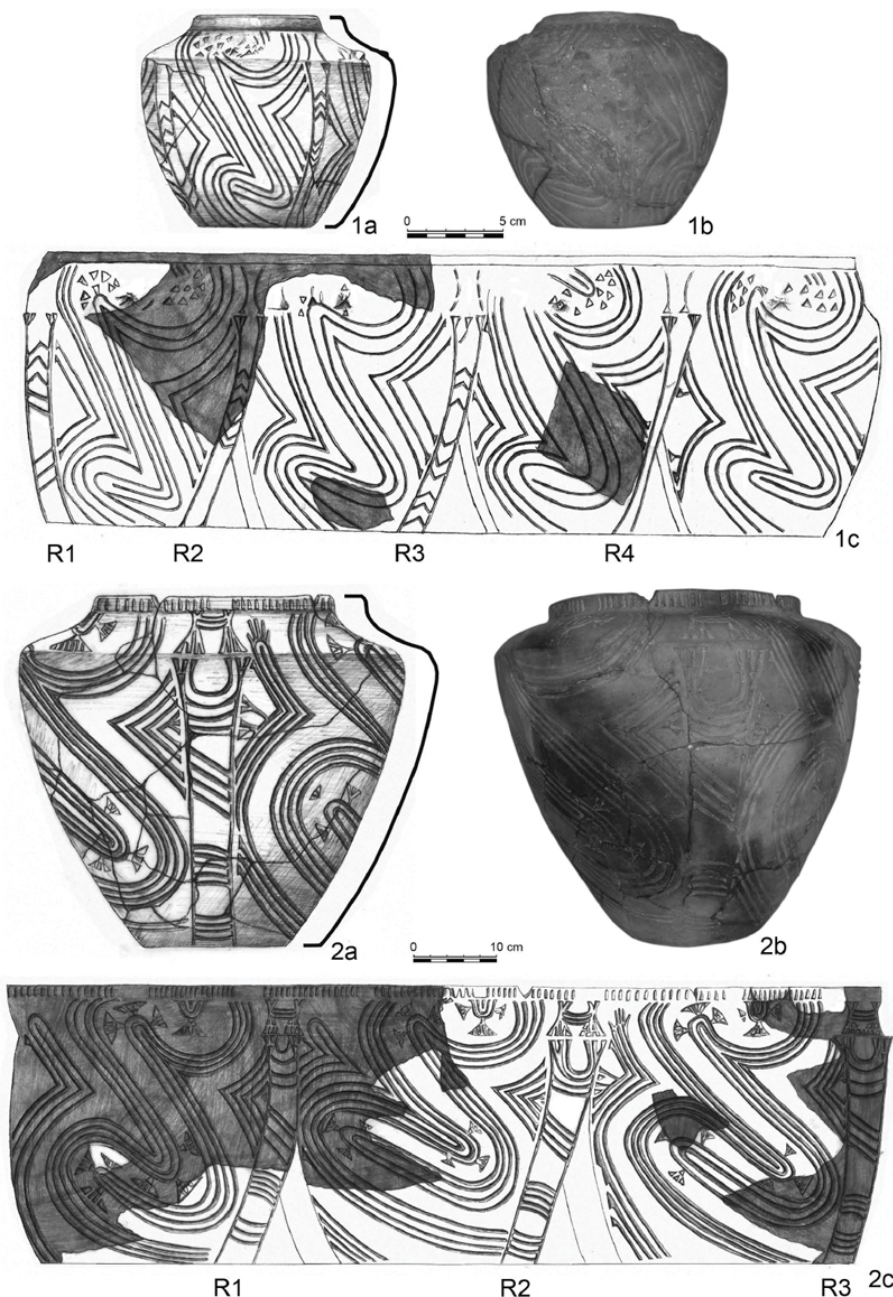


Figure 10.4: Vessels with stylised pillar-like anthropomorphic representations from Baia-În Muchie 2012-2014 (R = anthropomorphic representation): 1.a-c. from dwelling 1/2012; 2.a-c. from

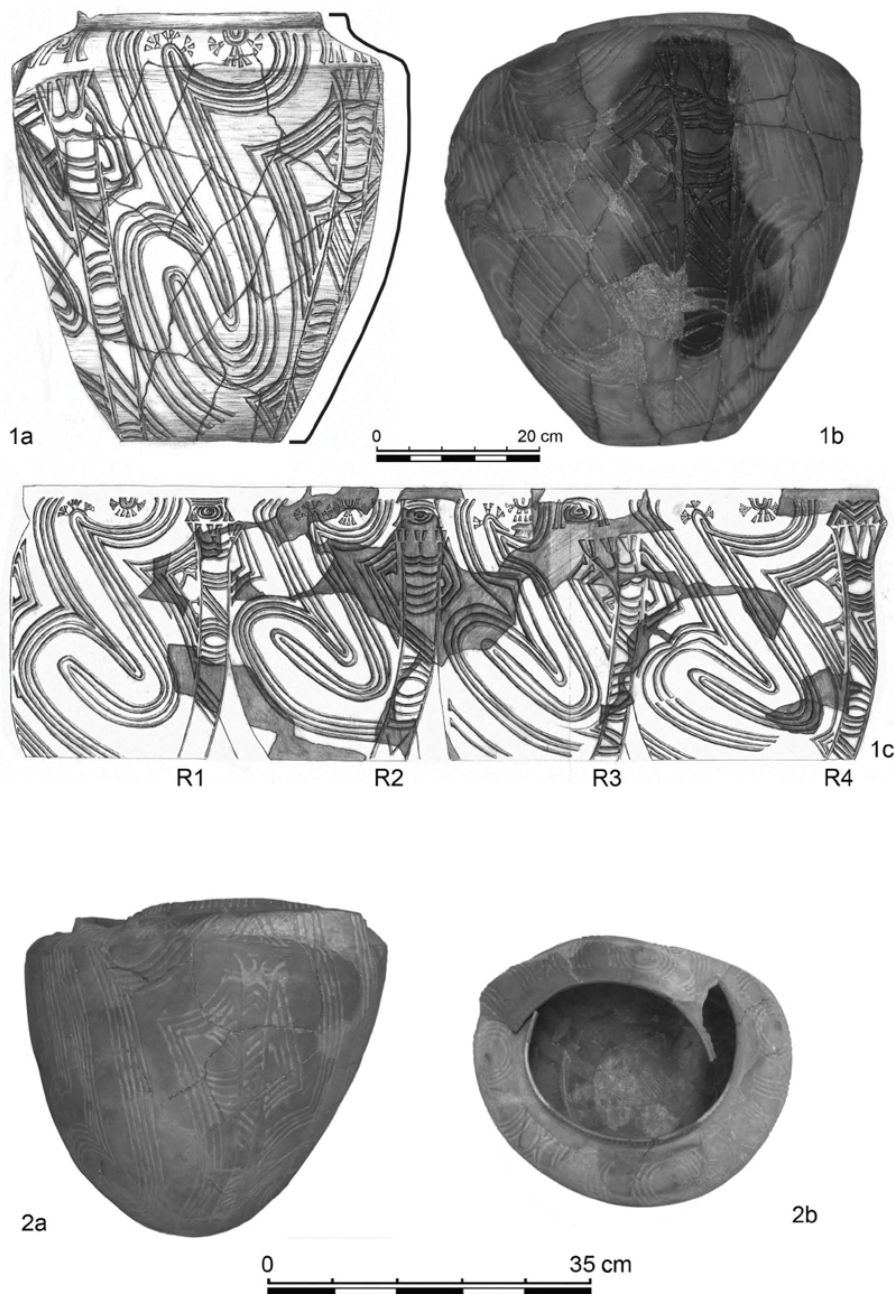


Figure 10.5: Vessels with stylised pillar-like anthropomorphic representations from Baia-În Muchie 2012–2014 (R = anthropomorphic representation): 1.a–c. from dwelling 2/2012; 2.a–b. from dwelling 1/2012.

The bodies are depicted with: long silhouettes, completely ornamented with short horizontal lines (such bodies are present only

on the vessel from Traian–Dealul *Viei* and one other from Baia–În *Muchie*, both from the earliest Precucuteni I stage); long silhouettes ornamented with two vertical parallel rows consisting of short horizontal incised lines; long silhouettes ornamented with groups of straight, oblique, angular or half-circular lines. Ways of depicting the anthropomorphic “silhouettes” resemble long ornamented dresses, sometimes with trains, different accessories depicted with apexes, maybe necklaces (?).

Finally, the arms of the “silhouettes” were depicted schematically (with a single exception showing the hand with five fingers) using long parallel lines which become angular in the region of the elbow, sometimes with apexes. It looks like the artists suggested several positions of the arms: behind the back, one pointing up and the other down; both arms laid down; one arm with the hand behind the head and the other with the hand laying behind the back or on the hip.

Interpretation³

The following analysis, corroborated with studies of religious beliefs (history of religion), reveals several general conclusions. To start with, we point out that, of all the sources that we examined, Mircea Eliade’s studies on the history of religions are, perhaps, the most complex ones; the large number of papers written after he published his works confirmed the validity of his theses.⁴ On the other hand, we also agree with René Guénon, who argues that “there are symbols which are common for the most different and most distant traditions, and not because they are loaned, which is impossible in most cases, but because these symbols actually belong to a primordial tradition, from which every traditional manifestation originated, directly or indirectly” (Guénon 2008: 40); this theory is also enunciated by Mircea Eliade:

myths become damaged, symbols turn profane, but they never disappear [...] Symbols and myths come a long way: they are part of the human psyche and thus it is impossible for us not to meet them in every existential aspect of the modern man in *Cosmos* (Eliade 1994: 31–32; same theory in Herea 2013: 31).

In fact, more and more researchers claim that a series of divinities of Classic Greece and Mesopotamia, as well as a series of Greek and/or Anatolian mythological themes, all originate in the Balkan Neo-Eneolithic era (Lévêque 1972: 145–79; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1977: 42; Ursulescu and Batariuc 1987: 309–312; Monah 1997: 27–28, 212–215; Ursulescu and Tencariu 2006: 59; Ursulescu 2011: 199, 211; Monah 2012: 35, 242; Zugravu 2013: 68–70 and *passim*). We also subscribe to Moshe Idel’s theory, who, when discussing the subject, claims that

“religion” is “a conglomerate of ideas, cosmologies, beliefs, institutions, hierarchies, elites and rites, all varying in time”, the available methodologies only taking into consideration “one or two of these various aspects, thus limiting the complexity of religion to a rather oversimplified unity” (Idel 2008: 9).

The analysing of the ceramic vessels depicting stylised anthropomorphic representations, based on the above-mentioned theories, allowed us to draw the following conclusions:

1. The tectonic disposition of the decorum might denote a “mythical” distribution of two worlds – one with an htonic character and one having a Uranian character. Another remarkable aspect is the shape of the ceramic vessels depicting stylised anthropomorphic representations, which is always the same. The two elements, together with the decorations themselves, lead us to believe that the ceramic pots in question are cult vessels, their adornments describing one of the pre-Cucutenian “myths”, probably a fertility one (bearing in mind the various aspects of the notion). “The periodical ‘salvation’ of mankind is deeply connected to a guaranteed food supply for the following year (harvest consecration). For the archaic man, life is an absolute reality and, as such, it is a sacred one.” (Eliade 2008: 63; same theory, Eliade 1978: 41–42, 50; Eliade 2008a: 265). Within this context, we must mention the frequent burials in ritual ceramic jars, spread throughout the Balkan Neo-Eneolithic area, which, if we are to view the womb as the container of life, might suggest the act of creation, thus acknowledging the direct connection between tomb and death – burial/grains – fertility/renewal (Eliade 2003: 27; Băčvarov 2004: 152; Băčvarov 2004a: 47; Băčvarov 2006: 102; Eliade 2008a: 357–59). We also mention Goce Naumov’s theory about the clay models of houses, the author arguing that “the capacity of ceramic vessels to retain and to contain matter triggered a comparison to a woman’s physical capacity to feed and regenerate” (Naumov 2008: 99).

2. Every “silhouette” is adorned in a similar way, “wearing” the same garments and holding the same position, thus emphasising their cultic role (Garfinkel 2003: 99); but there is always a silhouette that stands out, either because it has a few extra decorative elements, or because of an adornment depicted above its head (positioned on the vessel’s shoulder), an adornment which, in our opinion, doesn’t necessarily represent an ordinary head embellishment, but on the contrary, it emphasises the character’s “role” and “position” within the “myth” (Niculescu

2011: 35–36);⁵ our analysis did not reveal any snake representations (Телегин 1994: 74).

3. The head of the silhouettes is always rendered similarly, by using semicircles, triangles and dots, which can only suggest the fact that there can only be one “character”, who is depicted in a different, new position every time. We are not ruling out Dmitri Ia. Teleghin’s theory regarding the character’s age either (Телегин 1994: 74). The heads of some of the anthropomorphic representations discovered at Tell Azmak–Karanovo I, for example, were rendered in a more or less similar way, (Garfinkel 2003: 212 fig. 10.18.b–c), which might indicate a southern “provenance” of the pre-Cucutenian deities (Boghian 2012: 115); the same theory, *i.e.* of a southern influence, can also be applied when studying the “hora”-type vessels (Nițu 1970: 95; Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 176). As a matter of fact, it has been often argued that the origin of some of the elements in anthropomorphic representations can be traced to the Starčevo culture (Bader 1968: 387–88; Székely 1971: 129–30, 132; Збенович, 1980: 137; Popușoi 2008: 19). Last but not least, we must point out the discovery of anthropomorphic representations on “mushroom-type” ceramic vessels belonging to Szakálhát, Tisa and early Lengyel cultures (Barna 2014: 19–21, 24–25, figs 3–4).

4. The silhouettes are rendered facing the viewer; apart from suggesting a dancing figure, the silhouette’s position might also imply the fact that the character acts as the guardian of whatever the ceramic pots contain (Телегин 1994: 74). But if we subscribe to the theory that a hand depiction is directly connected to the concept of fertility, then the two above mentioned examples are just as suggestive (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1967: 56).

5. The silhouettes are probably depicted while performing a dance, one hand behind the back, and one either pointing up or resting on the hip. (In prehistoric Anatolia, there are representations of anthropomorphic figures depicted with the arms in similar positions (Garfinkel 2003: 28–29, fig. 2.1, D1-2 and H type); in the Cucuteni–Tripolye culture, anthropomorphic figures continue to be painted on vessels towards its final phases (Бурдо 2010: fig. 2.16).) We feel that the sacredness of the dance should not be discussed in this context, as it is part of every cult, in all eras, up until today; Mircea Eliade pointed out that “every dance was a sacred dance originally ... dances always imitate an archetypal gesture or commemorate a mythical moment ...” (Eliade 2008: 33; Garfinkel 2003: 86–87, as well as *passim*, for a

complete analysis of the dance). In ancient, predynastic Egypt, the dancing scenes always depicted deities, as dancing was associated with fertility cults (Baumgärtel 1960: 144–148; apud Garfinkel 2003: 93, argues, unjustifiably, in our opinion, that “every anthropomorphic figure represented ordinary people, not human beings with supernatural powers”, and that representations of mythological scenes appeared later, in the 4th millennium, in Mesopotamia; we do not believe that so early in the history of mankind, people created art for art’s sake; therefore, we agree with Mircea Eliade: “the archaic man tends to live *in the Sacred* or around objects long ago consecrated” because the sacred equals “*power* and, eventually, *reality*” (Eliade 2007: 14).) When discussing the central-Anatolian Chalcolithic era, Burcin Erdogan also claims that decorated pottery offers a lasting, symbolic medium, created in order to construct and maintain social connections through ritual activities (Erdogan 2009: 135). Without going into details, we argue that it is possible for the “hora”-type pottery to bear similar symbols, since it first appears in Precucuteni II–Tripolye A (Larga Jijia: Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974a: fig. 86.3), probably via Petrești A, and becomes extremely frequent during Cucuteni A phase (Monah 2012: 182). Anton Nițu categorises the characters depicted on “hora”-type ceramic ware either as ancestors, or as goddesses, associated with four or six spatial directions (Nițu 1970: 94–95); while analysing the same archaeological objects, Silvia Marinescu-Bîlcu argues that “ritual dances [were] performed in the course of offering ceremonies, probably offering products of the first harvests and baby animals” (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: 177). Pierre Lévêque argues that the dance is a “fundamental spiritual ceremony”, common to all archaic communities (apud Monah 2012: 187).

6. The number of lines that mark out the silhouettes’ arms might also suggest a chaining, a physical connection between the characters, and even their transfiguration throughout the “myth”, to the point of completely returning to an initial state, to an *illo tempore*; “the man can but repeat the act of Creation; throughout one year, the religious calendar commemorates all the cosmological phases which took place *ab origine*” (Eliade 2008: 28; same theory, Eliade 1978: 19; Eliade 1994: 88; Eliade 2008a: 353). At the same time, the number and order in which the lines depicting the arms were arranged, might also suggest physical bounding and knots (Eliade 1994: 137, 140; Eliade 1995: 180)

7. All characters wear long garments and/or a “train”; this

particular detail seems to prove the fact that the statuettes wearing garments might represent images of a different “myth”, one which differs from that in which the characters seem to be naked-symbol of a pre-existing, archetypal character, that time forgot (Eliade 2003: 28; Eliade 2007: 103; Monah 2012: 232). In our opinion, every representation is a feminine one (Eliade 2003: 18); apart from depicting garments, the rhombus representations (Fig. 10.4.1c) (which is the symbol of purity (Eliade 2008a: 96), of the vulva (Eliade 2008a: 180, 182)), or of the *omphalos* (the rhombus can also be viewed as the centre of the world, while fertility represents just one of the many aspects of the centre (Eliade 2008a: 243–45)), substantiates the theory.

8. Just about every anthropomorphic figure seems to wear necklaces, which also gives the characters a particular status; this type of neck ornament is rarely depicted in the Precucuteni–Tripolye A ornamentation.⁶ An interesting aspect is the analogy with Ishtar’s entrance in the Inferno, from whom, while passing through the seven gates, at the express command of the Queen of the Afterworld, the following accessories and garments were taken away: her crown, her earrings, her collar of pearls, her breast adornments, her hip belt, with the birth stone attached to it, her arm and leg bracelets, and, eventually the garments covering her from the waist down; when she stepped out, all her accessories were given back to her, but in reverse order (Daniel, Acsan 2008: 70–71, 73–74).

9. The arrangement of the meanders, which seems not to take into consideration the tectonic decorum, and which join each other on the body of the vessel, might represent a joining of two worlds – one with a htonic character and one having a Uranian one – and a Hierogamy between Earth and Sky which resulted in a Cosmic Creation (Eliade 2008: 290; Eliade 2008a: 254), “the divine union [facilitates] the terrestrial fecundation. The world regenerates each time Hierogamy is imitated” (Eliade 2008: 31); the meander endpoint which is always depicted as a “menorah” type cup, positioned on the vessel’s shoulder, might suggest a continuous fertilisation, different from one season to another, a cycle “from beginning to end”. As for the triangular apexes, it is possible that they symbolise the “seed”, which comes in different shapes – the rain, the seminal fluid, or the death-rebirth cycle. (Eliade 2003: 27; Eliade 2008a: 357–58). At the same time, the arrangement of the meanders symbolises the labyrinth (sometimes defined as Mother Earth’s body cf. Eliade 2008b: 178), “the place for an

earlier test [which] can only indicate the way to initiation and, at the same time, the obstacle which prevents the unqualified profane man to even come close to this place” (Guénon 2008: 246), a labyrinth which can also signify the ladder (Eliade 1994: 61–63) – an ascension ladder (Eliade 2008a: 119–20; apud Guénon 2008: 402 – the ladder is an “axial” symbol) and/or a cosmic tree – symbol of life (Eliade 2008a: 279, 291) – which transforms the goddess into an “endless source of cosmic fecundation” (Eliade 2008a: 292). The cup, as well as the vessel itself, is also a symbolic one – it signifies the abundance cup (Dictionary 2009: 315) and the heart (Guénon 2008: 23), the two symbols being complementary. Extremely relevant for our study is the fact that a recent x-ray radiography of a Cucutenian statuette discovered at Ruginoasa, showed that the heart was deliberately marked out by a pebble added in the clay body (Pavel *et al.* 2013: 326, fig. 8); moreover, in ancient Egypt, the heart was represented by a cup-shaped hieroglyph (Guénon 2008: 110, n. 17). On the other hand, the “filled cup” is always connected to the “the Plant of Life” (Eliade 2008a: 294); in archaic Greece, the grains, as well as the dead, were laid in clay vessels (Eliade 2008a: 359). The pot also represents a union of clay and water, fundamental elements of genesis (Boghian 2012: 117 and n. 59); the cup is often interpreted as the archetypal feminine symbol, the interior of the female representing her central symbolism (Neumann 1974: 39–40).⁷ Also interesting is the arrangement of the decorum on the shoulder of the ceramic vessel discovered at Traian–Dealul Viei: two meander endpoints are continued by one and by two lines into a “menorah” type cup, while two other lines are broken: the “independent” cups are arranged, probably deliberately, between the one “silhouette” with a decorum above its head, and the next two (the head of each silhouette is rendered by three triangles, and their body decorations depict different garments). Could a cycle be symbolised? Or the “way” to the “full cup” and to the sky-earth hierogamy? All of these symbols are complementary. Just as well, one of the objects associated with Persephone is the jug (Ferrari 2003: 656). In some cultures, the left shoulder is associated with the funerary ritual (Eliade 2008a: 355) (in most cases, if we are to accept the fact that the “menorah” type cups are facing the viewer, it becomes obvious that the cups are placed on the characters’ left side).

10. As far as the decorative elements on the vessels’ shoulders are concerned, the linear decorum on top of the “silhouette” in [Fig.](#)

10.4.2.a–c, might depict either a zoomorphic representation, or two interconnected couples of dancers, or two interrelated ploughs;⁸ we believe that the third interpretation is the most truthful one, considering that the plough is actually a masculine principle (Eliade 2008a: 268), and implicitly a Uranian one. As for the “silhouettes” in Fig. 10.2.1.a–c, the decorum is much more complex. Compositions of spiral volutes bordered by linear elements were created above three of the characters (perhaps suggesting interrelated ploughs, too?) as well as a third, geometric, linear decorative register. The spiral, a polyvalent symbol of the moon, as well as a representation of the shell (Eliade 1994: 176–78), is also associated with fertility and may indicate a light–darkness (Eliade 2008a: 173–74, 203) or birth-life cycle (Eliade 1994: 178), thus gaining a cyclical evaluative aspect, somewhat labyrinthical (Dictionary 2009: 853). Noteworthy is the fact that the three spiral volutes are composed differently, all of them probably bearing various aspects of the “myths” (moon phases? seasons? ages? moments within a cycle?). The decorum on top of the fourth “silhouette” depicts stacking rhombuses (rhombuses of decreasing sizes placed one inside the other) which might symbolise the pregnancy; this particular symbol is also rendered on the vessel discovered at la Slobodka Zapadnaia (Fig. 10.8.6); nonetheless, it is certain that the decorum itself points out the character’s distinctive “function”. The decoration on the shoulder of one of the fragmentary vessels (Fig. 10.6.1) is rendered by two concentric semicircles, endpoints down, with four vertical lines positioned above them; the entire composition is bordered by marginal lines; positioned near the base of the shoulder, both the marginal lines as well as the semicircles were covered in excised triangles; in this case, we are talking about a possible representation of the *omphalos*, perceived as the centre (Eliade 2008a: 296). We cannot know if the decoration on the vessel in Fig. 10.1.1.a–c is a complete one, or if its maker intended only to mark out the “roles” of the depicted characters; it is certain, however, that there are only two “silhouettes” which still retain their original bordering lines, rendered differently, their endpoints rounded on the exterior (the third surviving silhouette had no decoration above its head). The vessel discovered at Timkovo (Fig. 10.8.7) deals with the same situation – a decoration of four vertical, slightly curved, lines, orientated, in groups of two, towards the exterior. Only the vessel discovered at Traian–Dealul Viei is in a unique position: the decorum depicts just one

“silhouette” with an ornament (four oblique lines) above its head – i.e. the silhouette with one arm pointing up and the other one down. The decorum on the shoulder of the vessel discovered at Slobodka Zapadnaia (Fig. 10.8.6) resembles the rhombus and is, therefore, associated with its symbols.

11. The data resulted after calculating the volumes of the studied ceramic vessels is also extremely interesting, considering the fact that vessels come from different settlements located sometimes far apart from each other, this might indicate a general spiritual practice of the Precucuteni–Tripolye A communities (see Ursulescu 2011: 198; Niculescu 2011: 37). As the volumes are always multiple of 0.5 litres, we argue that the ceramic vessels might have been used as sacred units of measurement.

12. The vessels depict, almost always, a constant number of four “silhouettes”, hence the hypothesis that the figures are connected with a lunar cult, the Moon (known to have three or four phases) – “universal measuring instrument ” (Eliade 2008a: 172) – being, unquestionably, “the celestial body for the rhythm of life” that governs the water, rain, vegetation and fertility (Eliade 2008a: 171), just the same as it “experiences death as repose and regeneration, but never as the ending” (Eliade 2008: 179, 186–89). In ancient Greece, the Horae, daughters of Zeus and Themis, goddesses of the seasons, were three or four (their number differs from one source to another), usually portrayed bearing seasonal fruits (Ferrari 2003: 439–40). Just as well, Celeus, the king of Eleusis, had three (according to Paus.I.38.3) or four (according to Homer, *To Demeter* I. 110-111) daughters, all of them meeting Demeter near the *Fountain of the Girls*.

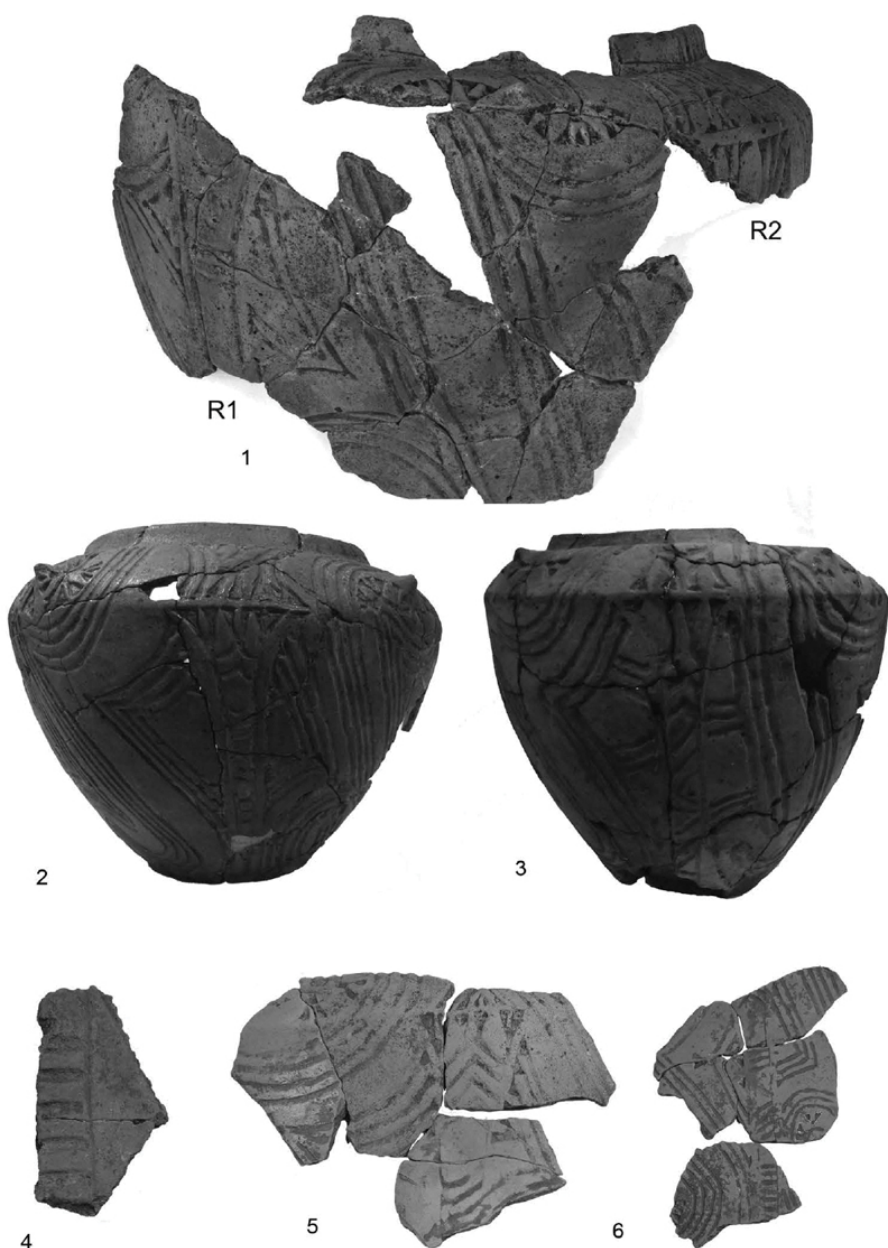


Figure 10.6: Vessels and vessel fragments with stylised pillar-like anthropomorphic representations from Baía-În Muchie 2012–2014 (R = anthropomorphic representation): 1. from dwelling 1/2012; 2. from dwelling 3/2013; 3. from dwelling 3/2013; 4. from dwelling 3/2013; 5. from dwelling 3/2013; 6. from dwelling 3/2013.

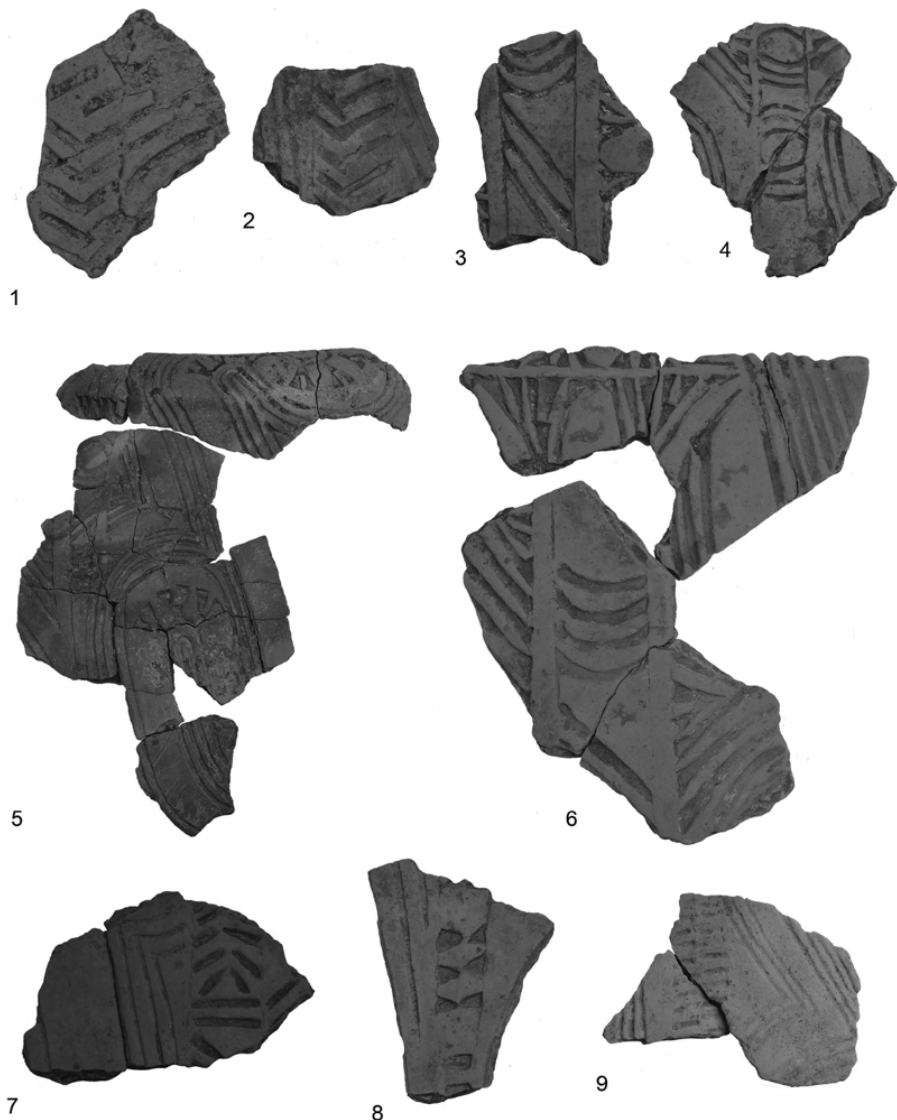
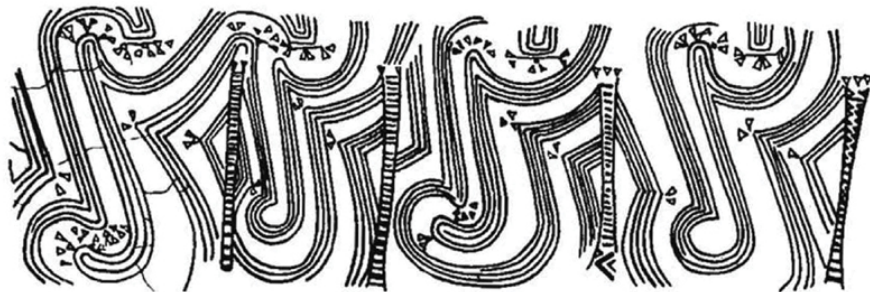


Figure 10.7: Vessel fragments with stylised pillar-like anthropomorphic representations from Baia-În Muchie 2012–2014: 1. from dwelling 3/2013; 2. from dwelling 3/2013; 3. from dwelling 3/2013; 4. from the vicinity of dwelling 3/2013; 5. from dwelling 3/2013; 6. from dwelling 3/2013; 7. from dwelling 3/2013; 8. from dwelling 3/2013; 9. from feature 9/2014.

All these possible interpretations, together with the anthropomorphic representations themselves, mostly feminine ones, lead us to believe that the Neo-Eneolithic communities only celebrated the lunar cults. The solar elements, rarely present, are associated with the feminine cults, and, implicitly, to fertility (Eliade 2008a: 108; Ursulescu 2011: 199); in fact, the cults addressed directly to Uranus become more and more independent when, apart from being the fecundators, they also develop into “guarantees of the universal order, keepers of canons and

embodiments of the Law” (Eliade 2008a: 110). We believe that, ever since the Palaeolithic (Chirica 2004: 103 and *passim*; Chirica *et al.* 2012: 50–52) and continuing up the transition period to the Bronze Age, the feminine “pantheon”, in different ways, dominated the beliefs of communities throughout Asia Minor, Anatolia and southeast Europe (Fedele 2008: 46), “the earth’s fertility, [being] sympathetic to the feminine fecundity”, perhaps as a result of the mystery surrounding the vegetation cycle, leading to the death and then the rebirth of the seed (Mitrevski 2001: 91; Eliade 2008a: 172; Eliade 2011: 52–53; Boghian 2012: 116). The transformations from the end of Neo-Eneolithic led to the occurrence of two mythical systems (Fedele 2008: 47), the Neo-Eneolithic one being influenced by the Aegean culture (Platon 1988: III, 151–57; Eliade, Culianu 1993: 159; Ries 2000: 107), by the Eleusinian Mysteries (Briant 2009: 50 and *passim*) which last for a long time (Ries 2000: 109), or by the Sumerian and then the Babylonian worlds (Ries 2000: 156; Zugravu 2013: 71–72, n. 54). After radical changes at the transition to Bronze Age, out of the Neo-Eneolithic sublayer, only one deity survives, The Great Mother, Gaea, Goddess of the Earth – daughter of Chaos, “powerful goddess, birth giver to all that lives and grows out of her body” (Kun n.d.: 7; Eliade 2008a: 252), whose importance, nonetheless, will soon diminish (her place will then be taken by Rhea (Ferrari 2003: 717), then Demeter (Eliade 2008a: 272), whose origins, it is believed, can be traced in the Neolithic era (Larson 2007: 69)) in favour of solar deities (particularly after the Dorians’ arrival (Ries 2000: 108)); in Near East, the Great Mother has been represented since the 4th millennium by Inanna/Ishtar (Groneberg 2007: 319ff.; Westenholz 2007: 333ff.; Daniel, Acsan 2008: 35 and n. 1; Zugravu 2013: 71–72, n. 54), Gatumdu (Ries 2000: 156), Ki (Kernbach 1978: 23; Kernbach 1983: 337; Leick 2003: 104) or Baba (Leick 2010: 29). However, the “feminine” cults, of greater or less importance, continue to be extremely popular up until the emergence of Christianity; but even more interesting, apart from a series of agricultural rituals which are still practiced today (Eliade 2011: 62), are the “roles” the goddesses in the popular cults act (ielele – mythical Romanian creatures- the fairies, the she-bears, the saints of the days of the week, the fairy godmothers, babele – the old women – etc. (Ghinoiu 2001: 12, 89–90, 200–02, 214; Talos 2001: 15, 71, 178–79, 190–92)), which can probably be traced in the Neo-Eneolithic sublayer as well, and in the Ancient Greek mythology (Parcae or Erinyes, older than the third generation of gods).



1a



1b



2



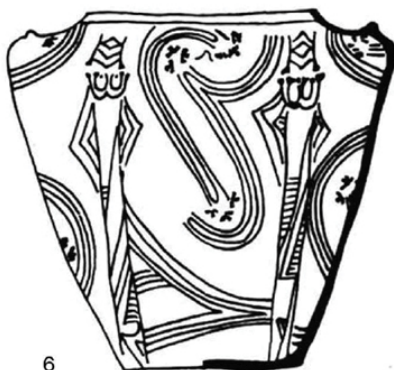
4



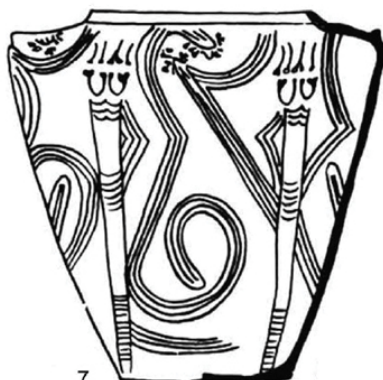
3



5



6



7

Figure 10.8: Vessels and vessel fragments with stylised pillar-like anthropomorphic representations from other Precucuteni-Tripolye A sites: 1.a-b. Traian Dealul Viei (after Черныш 1982: tab. LIV.18); 2. Aleksandrovka (after Burdo 2011: fig. 5.1); 3. Ghigoiești-Trudești (after Marinescu-Bîlcu 1974: fig. 39.9); 4. Slobodka-Zapadnaia (after Burdo 2011: fig. 5.4); 5. Florești I (after Пасек 1960: пуч. 91a); 6. Slobodka-Zapadnaia (after Бурдо 1989: пуч. 5); 7. Timkovo – Slobodka-Zapadnaia (after Бурдо 1989: пуч. 5).

The ceramic vessels decorated with stylised pillar-like anthropomorphic representations from Precucuteni-Tripolye A are standardised objects and, implicitly, ritual items, associated with fertility and fecundity, probably elements of a lunar cult.⁹ A series of

rituals that might have been practiced within the community (Garfinkel 2003: 92; Erdoğu 2009: 136) at a given time, were illustrated on these vessels; if so, then it is possible that these illustrations depict goddesses, united in mystical dances, who guard special, sacred grains (Телегин 1994: 74) either in the cold season, or during an agricultural cycle; furthermore, just as important is the fact that most of the vessels discovered at Baia-În *Muchie* were found inside the dwellings. Yet the association of feminine deities with grain is also evident in the case of anthropomorphic statuettes; at Luca Vrublevetskaia, grains and/or flour were found in the clay body of a series of figurines (Бибигов 1953: 206–09; Пасек 1953: 49; Пасек 1961: 50; Зиньковская 1976: 162; Погочева 1983: 115–116), most likely a legacy from the Linear Pottery culture (Höckmann 1987: 90–91), a ritual which is often interpreted as a possible prefiguration of the doctrine of the transubstantiation (Monah 2012: 236); it is an association made up until the end of Cucuteni A (Monah 2012: 74).

Conclusions

This preliminary information on the specific vessels with stylised anthropomorphic pillar-like representations from the 2012–2014 campaigns in Baia allows us to draw some conclusions and to contour some directions for further research.

First of all, the quantity of such vessels from Baia (68) is by far larger than the number of similar vessels/fragments known from other sites. Most of the vessels were found in dwellings; the “richest” one being the building L3 with remarkable architecture and outstanding dimensions. The volumes of the vessels are multiple of 0.5 or 5 litres, suggesting both their use rather for storage of liquids and the existence of a certain measurement system for such pots. The degree of schematisation of human figures is extremely high, at the same time there are many smaller elements and ornamental units that could reflect possible garments, accessories and so on. In one case, there is a realistically modelled hand.

The analysis of context and iconography of these specific vessels is able to provide interesting and valuable insights into their function and meaning. Further investigations in Baia are able to provide even more material of this type. Also, it is very possible that new unknown vessels and, especially, fragments will be found in older collections.

In contrast to vessels with anthropomorphous depictions, excavations in Baia yielded a surprisingly low number of clay anthropomorphic figurines (just five from more than 500 excavated square metres) and that is another interesting aspect of the settlement

which shall be clarified and interpreted basing on material from future investigations. Also, very promising looks the possibility of a final analysis of the vessels from dwelling L3 which will be performed after its complete excavations and will therefore represent a thought-provoking attempt of characterising the complete inventory of pots with anthropomorphic depictions from this unique and remarkable construction.

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¹In 2013, Stanislav Țerna from “High Anthropological School” University (Chișinău, Republic of Moldova) joined the research team.

²For a detailed description of some of the vessels see Ursu and Aparaschivei 2014.

³The cultural-religious interpretation was made by Constantin-Emil Ursu and reflects his opinion.

⁴In a recently published study, Nelu Zugravu claims that “we can’t not agree with the rightful opinions of those specialists who noticed ‘severe methodological’ deficiencies, impossible to combat, regarding the Romanian history of religions – ‘the arbitrary and simplifying options’, applied to ‘the religious documents’, ‘a relative study of sources’, ‘erroneous references’, the absence of a constructive, analytical criticism, and ‘the complete indifference for the historic and ethnographic contexts’ – all of which have negative consequences for the study of religious phenomena – ‘abusive generalizations’, ‘questionable interpretations’ and ‘a subjective hermeneutics’” (Zugravu 2013: 64 and n. 11); without going any further in details and pointing out that we agree with most of the opinions voiced by the researcher from Iași,

we recommend, nonetheless, the reviews of two of the studies quoted above: Berzovan 2009: 403–07 and Gheorghiu 2003: 28–29.

⁵One such representation of the role of a particular character within a myth is illustrated on the model of a house belonging to a Chief of the Haida Native American tribe (19th century) Gombrich 2012: 49, fig. 26.

⁶There are only a few female statuettes with jewellery decorations in Precucuteni–Tripolye A area: Bernashevca (Збенович 1980: fig. 80), Poduri – three painted figures that are part of the “The Covenant of the Goddesses” (Monah *et al.* 2003: 107), Isacova II (Sorochin 2000: fig. 2.12), Bernovo Luka (Pogoševa 1985: figurines no. 124, 142, 144), Luka Vrublevetskaia (Pogoševa 1985: no. 261).

⁷The American researcher comes up with the symbolic equation woman = body = vessel = world (Neumann 1974: 43).

⁸See the antler plough - Черныш 1982: 233, fig. 18.

⁹We believe that the “theory of repetition”, formulated by Laia Orphanidis when discussing the anthropomorphic representations from Thessaloniki (Orphanidis, Gallis 2011: 56), can also be applied to the vessels depicting stylised anthropomorphic representations from Precucuteni–Tripolye A.

Chapter 11

Human-shaped pottery from the tell settlement of Sultana-Malu Roșu

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Introduction

The issue of prehistoric anthropomorphic pottery currently represents a challenge for archaeological research from different points of view (e.g. typology, technology, aestheticity, art, function, meaning and symbolism).

The burned clay pot associated with the general human shape or only with some anthropomorphic features represents a special category of vessels, certainly different from “everyday pottery”, both in terms of quantity and quality. The full understanding of these kinds of pots involves a complex analysis, based on typological-technological studies, but also on the evaluation of the archaeological contexts in which these vessels were discovered.

This paper will present and analyse several anthropomorphic pots discovered in the Eneolithic tell settlement of Sultana-Malu Roșu, where many such vessels were found.

The site settings

The tell settlement of Sultana-Malu Roșu is located in the northern area of the Balkan region, in southeast Romania (Fig. 11.1), on the right bank of the old Mostiște River (which has been converted into several artificial lakes), about 7 km from the Danube river, near the border to Bulgaria (Andreescu and Lazăr 2008; Lazăr *et al.* 2016).

The Eneolithic tell settlement of Sultana-Malu Roșu was the first Gumelnița site subject to scientific research at the beginning of 20th century (Andrieșescu 1924). Between 1950 and 1960 the site has benefited from a series of small-scale research projects conducted by

the Călărași Museum and the Oltenița Museum (Andreescu and Lazăr 2008). Since 1974 the site had been researched almost entirely, and this process continued until 1982 (Isacescu 1984a, 1984b). The excavation was resumed by the National History Museum of Romania in 2001 and continues to this day (Andreescu and Lazăr 2008).

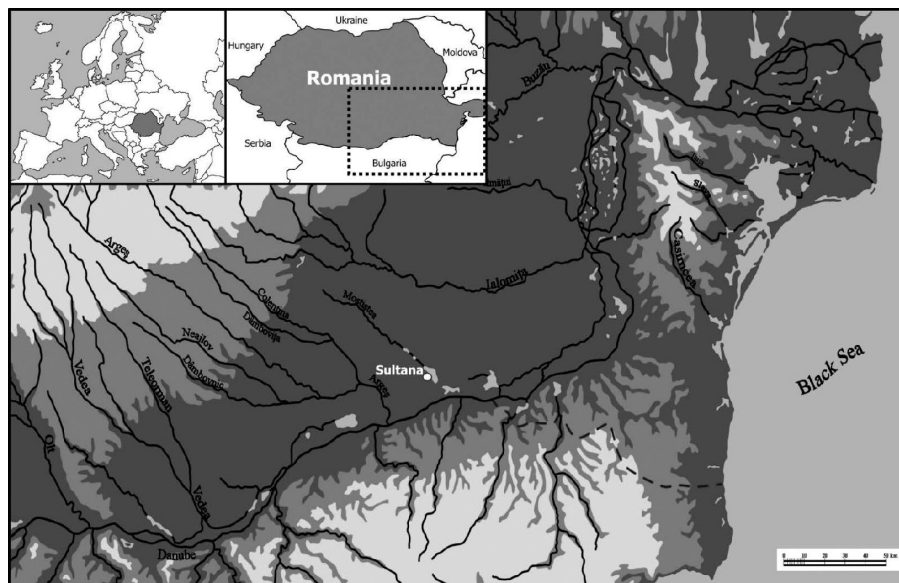


Figure 11.1: Location of the site Sultana-Malu Roșu.

From a cultural point of view the settlement of Sultana-Malu Roșu belongs to the Kodjadermen-Gumelnița-Karanovo VI cultural complex, one of the most flourishing civilizations from the Balkans in the second half of the 5th millennium BC (Andreescu and Lazăr 2008; Andreescu *et al.* 2011).

The AMS radiocarbon dates obtained for Sultana-Malu Roșu ($n = 8$) indicate that the settlement probably belongs to the chronological interval range of 4538–3961 cal. BC (95.4% probability) (Golea *et al.* 2014; Lazăr *et al.* 2016).

Materials and methods

Between 1957 and 2007 nine pots and lids were discovered in the tell settlement of Sultana-Malu Roșu that fit in with humanised pottery and which we intend to analyse in the current paper (Tab. 11.1). Seven of them (ID 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9) have been already published in a series of articles (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1967; Nițu 1969; Isacescu 1984b; Alexandrescu and Șimon 1989) or books (Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967; Andreescu 2002; Voinea 2005a, 2005b, 2009).

It should be noted that in the category of humanised pottery were

included only the vessels with human shape or those with some anthropomorphic attributes, not pots that have applied human figurines on the outer surface or inside (*e.g.* the vessel with lovers).

Table 11.1: Type and description of the humanised vessels from Sultana-Malu Roşu

<i>ID</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Reference</i>
1	Anthropomorphic vessel	A human-shaped vessel known as “The Goddess of Sultana” that represents a person in a standing position. The bottom is disproportionate compared to the top. The thighs, buttocks and pelvis and the coxal region are highlighted, showing clear elements of steatopygia. The upper limbs are stylised and placed very high, stuck to the body, the elbows are bent, the right arm resting on the left, which in turn has placed its fingers under the chin. The facial area is well represented. The eyes are rendered by an arched projection. The nose is powerfully outlined, and the mouth is shown by a relatively triangular notch, underlined with holes. On the sides, two large ears are added, pierced with four holes. On top of the figurine, the circular neck of the vessel is attached, with a threshold for supporting a lid (missing). The vessel was entirely painted with white decoration (<i>e.g.</i> spirals, circles, stripes, palmettes, and the sexual triangle). The attitude of this character represented as an anthropomorphic vessel seems a meditative one, which reminds us of the “Thinker of Cernavoda”.	Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967
2	Anthropomorphic vessel	A human-shaped vessel in a standing position. Head details are shaped schematically, horizontally elongated protrusions suggest the eyes and another three small protrusions represent the nose and ears. At the upper part is a cylindrical neck with a threshold for the lid. Two lateral handles seem to represent the hands. The bottom of the body is disproportionately high compared to the upper part. The large hips continue into massive legs that are slightly flattened at the base, providing the vertical stability of the vessel. Specific areas were prepared before the firing for the painted motives. The painted motives, in red and white, were applied after firing. The female sexual parts are well represented in the pubic area in the shape of a vertical incised line with a painted circle around. Other motives including lines, circles and a human hand, are hardly distinguishable on the upper part of the body.	Isăcescu 1984b
3	Anthropomorphic vessel	Half of a human-shaped vessel. Only its base has been preserved (one foot). There are no other anthropomorphic elements. The remaining part is painted in two colours (white and red) forming a pattern with eight vertical lines, hardly distinguishable due to secondary firing.	Unpublished
4	Normal vessel with a human mask	The upper part of a bitruncated vessel with a clay human mask under its rim. Two small hands are embossed on the maximum diameter, with three fingers each. The face is shorter and wider, the nose and the eyebrows are embossed. The almond-shaped eyes are well depicted.	Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967

5	Normal vessel with anthropomorphic attributes	A bitruncated vessel with some anthropomorphic elements: a human face on its neck and with little hands on the side. The ears are represented by two large lateral lobes, pierced by four perforations. The nose is embossed, and the eyes are fashioned by elongated protrusions, outlined with white paint. Above them, another protrusion represents the eyebrows. The mouth is located underneath an elongated nose, painted white, highlighted by small holes. On the maximum diameter, a line is drawn in white and bordered by four pairs of relatively symmetrically arranged projections representing human heads. Above the maximum diameter, there are human palms turned upward, with fingers distinctively modeled. On the outside, they have traces of white paint.	Alexandrescu and Şimon 1989
6	Lid with anthropomorphic attributes	The lid was found in association with its corresponding vessel previously described (ID 5). The lid has a hemispherical shape with five channels in the middle of the superior part, with pairs of white lines on both parts.	Alexandrescu and Şimon 1989
7	Lid with anthropomorphic attributes	Lid with a hemispherical shape that is representing a human head. The earlobes are pierced by six holes, and the nose is embossed with two punctures representing nostrils. The eyes are depicted by two incised lines. Under the mouth are other punctures like piercings. On the upper part, the hair is highlighted by oblique incisions, grouped on either side of a vertical incision, suggesting a kind of hairstyle.	Andreescu 2002
8	Normal vessel with anthropomorphic attributes	A small vessel with a globular body and two oblique necks that represent human hands. The upper part, most probably a human head, is missing. There are no other anthropomorphic elements depicted.	Unpublished
9	Anthropo-zoomorphic vessel	An anthropo-zoomorphic vessel. The front fragment of the pot displays eyes and eyebrows drawn with white paint. The nose is represented by an embossed line. The curved body has two short legs (the front ones) of a four-legged animal. Other white painted lines are obliquely drawn underneath the face.	Andreescu 2002

Probably the most interesting fact is that numerous humanised vessels of Gumelnița communities in Romania were discovered at the settlement of Sultana-Malu Roșu.

In this article, we propose an analysis of these humanised pottery from a typological, technological and functional point of view, without ignoring the contextual analysis of these findings.

Table 11.2: The contexts and the preservation state of the humanised vessels from Sultana-Malu Roșu

ID	Year	Context	Feature	Preservation status	No. of fragments	Restored	Reference
1	1965	burned house (?)	(?)	complete		no	Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967
2	1975	burned house	L2/1975	fragmentary	16	yes	Isăcescu 1984b
3	2003	burned house	L2/2003	fragmentary	9	yes	Unpublished
4	1957	(?)	(?)	fragmentary	6	yes	Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967
5	1975	burned house	L2/1975	fragmentary	10	yes	Andreescu 2002
6	1975	burned house	L2/1975	fragmentary	4	yes	Andreescu 2002
7	1975	burned house	L4/1975	complete		no	Andreescu 2002
8	2007	(?)	(?)	fragmentary	2	yes	Unpublished
9	1975	burned house	(?)	fragmentary	1	yes	Andreescu 2002

Preservation status

Unfortunately, most of the humanised vessels from Sultana-Malu Roşu were discovered in fragmentary condition ($n = 7$). Only two exemplars were found in complete condition. The detailed description of the vessels is presented in [Table 11.2](#).

Contexts

The conservation status of vessels reflects their find context. Thus, both of the humanised vessels from Sultana-Malu Roşu that were discovered in complete condition come from burned houses (ID 1 and 7). This situation is explained by the fact that the burned buildings, in some circumstances, offer optimal preservation conditions for the vessels. On the other hand, if we try to look at the entire batch of humanised pottery from Sultana-Malu Roşu, we observed that except for three vessels with uncertain context (ID 1, 4 and 8), all were found exclusively in burned houses. This observation leads us to the first conclusion related to humanised vessels from Sultana-Malu Roşu: they are always associated with buildings and probably they had strong links with residential space (in general) and the inhabitants of the houses (in particular).

Regarding the humanised vessels without a clear archaeological context (e.g. ID 1, 4 and 8), we can state that they are a result of the way how archaeological research was carried out in the second half of the twentieth century (Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967; Isăcescu 1984a, 1984b), when no attention was paid to the contextual situations identified in the field, significant being only the items discovered.

However, interpreting the data collected by our analysis of these vessels, we can make some relevant observations about the contexts in which those artefacts were discovered. Thus, for the “Goddess of Sultana” (ID 1, Figs 11.2–3), the secondary burning traces observed on

its exterior surface (Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967: 30–33) indicates that the vessel (most probably) comes from a burned house. Also, in case of the pot with a human mask (ID 4, Fig. 11.7), several traces of a secondary burning were observed both on the internal and external surfaces (Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967: 33–34), which also indicates indirectly that it was found in a burned house. Finally, the vessel with tubular hands (ID 8, Fig. 11.10) was found in 2007 during the removal of the soil from the old excavations (in the 70s and 80s, coordinated by C. Isacescu), deposited at the former archaeological sections. In the case of this vessel, traces of secondary burning have not been identified, which demonstrates that it comes from an unburned context (e.g. unburned house, foundation trench, waste area, etc.).

Only two pieces were found together – a normal bitronconic pot with anthropomorphic attributes and its lid (ID 5 and 6, Fig. 11.8). Also, in the case of other human-shaped vessels, it is possible that corresponding lids existed (ID 1, 2 and 3), but they have not been identified. In case of the lid with anthropomorphic attributes (ID 7, Fig. 11.9), we do not exclude the association with a human-shaped pot.

Typological and technological analysis

From a typological point of view, based on the classification system of anthropomorphic vessels developed by R. Andreescu (2002: 77), the humanised pottery from Sultana-Malu Roşu can be divided as follows: three *human-shaped vessels* (ID 1, 2 and 3), three *vessels with anthropomorphic attributes* (ID 4, 5 and 8), two *lids with anthropomorphic attributes* (ID 6 and 7) and one *anthropo-zoomorphic vessel* (ID 9). We also should mention that two of the *vessels with anthropomorphic attributes* (ID 4 and 5) have bitronconical shapes, while the other vessel (ID 8) has an approximately globular form. The *lids with anthropomorphic attributes* (ID 6 and 7) have a hemispherical shape. The *anthropozoomorphic vessel* (ID 9) has the shape of a pear, but we cannot be very sure about it, because the vessel is restored to 60%. A full description of the vessels is presented in Table 11.1.

In terms of dimensions, the humanised pottery from Sultana-Malu Roşu represents medium-sized vessels, with heights between 13.8 cm and 32.3 cm (Tab. 11.3). The diameters show a considerable variability determined by the vessels shape. The lids fit into similar parameters, both in terms of height and diameters.

From the technological point of view, the humanised pottery from Sultana-Malu Roşu shows a series of common elements but also some

particular ones. For highlighting the elements resulting from this analysis, we present further details about each vessel.

ID 1 (Figs 11.2–3). The paste was tempered with grog and contained natural non-plastics like rare, rounded, calcareous inclusions (up to 2 mm) and fine white mica. This type of paste is very common for the Eneolithic pottery discovered at Sultana-Malu Roșu (Ignat *et al.* 2013). Strong evidence about the vessel building technique is missing. The inner surface was smoothed and the external surface was polished. The eyes and the mouth were depicted as incised lines and the hands, the nose and the ears were embossed. There are four holes in the left ear and another ten under the mouth, possibly signs of some form of body piercing.

Table 11.3: The weight, capacity, and dimension of the humanised vessels from Sultana–Malu Roșu

ID	Weight (g)	Capacity (l)	Maximum rim diameter (cm)	Maximum base diameter (cm)	Maximum pot diameter (cm)	Height (cm)
1	1873	2	6.8	12.2	19.8	32.3
2	910	1.4	6.75	11.4	14.4	23.6
3	441	–	–	7	13.5	–
4	–	–	–	–	–	18.8
5	3449	8	11	9.5	29	30
6	178	0.3	12.5	–	12.5	5.5
7	147	–	9.5	–	9.5	5
8	259	0.2	3	3.5	8.9	–
9	254	–	–	–	–	13.8



Figure 11.2: The “Goddess of Sultana” (ID 1): a. photo of the outside; b–d. layout of the decoration (Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967, modified).

All external surfaces were painted with specific motifs in white dye before the initial firing (Fig. 11.3), but the secondary firing partially damaged it. There is a hypothesis that the painted motifs represent some form of tattoo art (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1967: 51).

ID 2 (Figs 11.4–5). The analysis of this second human shaped pot

from Sultana-Malu Roşu reveals that it was broken, and its 16 fragments discovered, when reconstructed, represent around 90% of the entire body (Tab. 11.2). Its paste has common characteristics within the site: grog as temper and natural inclusions (rounded calcareous fragments and fine white mica). It was built on a surface with many herbaceous stems that left their imprints in the moist clay of the base (Fig. 11.4.b). The walls are thin, and the cracks are oblique or vertical. The inner part was smoothed by fingers. The external surface was smoothed by a hard object, using vertical moves and then polished. In the upper part were embossed the ears, the eyes, the eyebrows and the nose. Two handles seem to symbolise the hands.

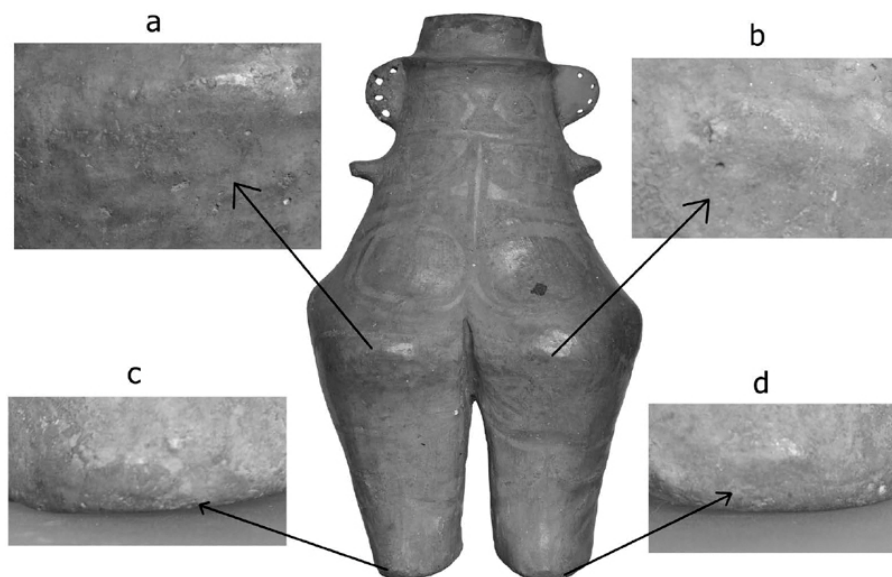


Figure 11.3: Abraded parts (ID 1): a–b. buttocks; c–d. heels.

Specific parts of the external surface were prepared for painting before the firing, by applying a thin layer of clay. The final motifs had been completed in those locations, using red and white dyes, after the firing process (Fig. 11.5.a–c). While the clay prepared surfaces are very well preserved, just a little part of the red and white dyes can be seen today.

ID 3 (Fig. 11.6). The paste contains grog as temper and natural non-plastic grains as calcareous inclusions and fine white mica. One horizontal crack on its maximum diameter indicates that the coils technique was used at some points to hand-build the walls (Rye 1981: 67–68), or the vessel was formed by two pieces joined at its maximum diameter. The inner surface was smoothed by horizontal moves. The external surface, even the base, was polished and then white dye was

applied on the walls, forming a decoration pattern with eight vertical lanes ([Fig. 11.6](#)). Both surfaces and the painted areas were damaged by the fire that destroyed the house.

ID 4 ([Fig. 11.7](#)). The paste contains calcareous inclusions and fine mica. The external surface of the neck was polished and then painted with graphite. The applied mask was only smoothed. Under the neck were placed two sketched clay hands.

a



b

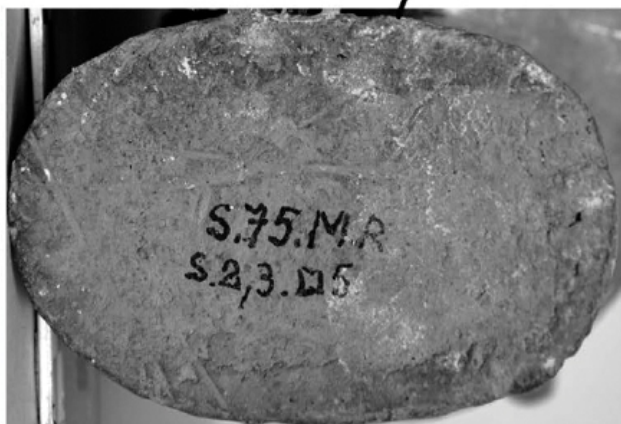


Figure 11.4: Human-shaped vessel (ID 2): a. photo of the outside; b. imprints of plant stalks on the base.

ID 5 and 6 (Fig. 11.8). The bi-truncated vessel (ID 5) was made with

paste containing grog as temper and rare natural inclusions like rounded calcareous grains and fine white mica. The horizontal cracks indicate that it was hand-build using clay coils. Other clay elements were added while the body was still wet (oblique and vertical channels, little human heads under the neck, the hands, the double eyes, the ears and the mouth). The inner surface was roughly smoothed with a hard object that dragged the grog grains, forming little horizontal scratches. The external surface was treated differently: the lower part was scratched with a sharp tool, the middle part well smoothed and the applied channels and the neck were polished. The white paint was applied in the recent restoration process.

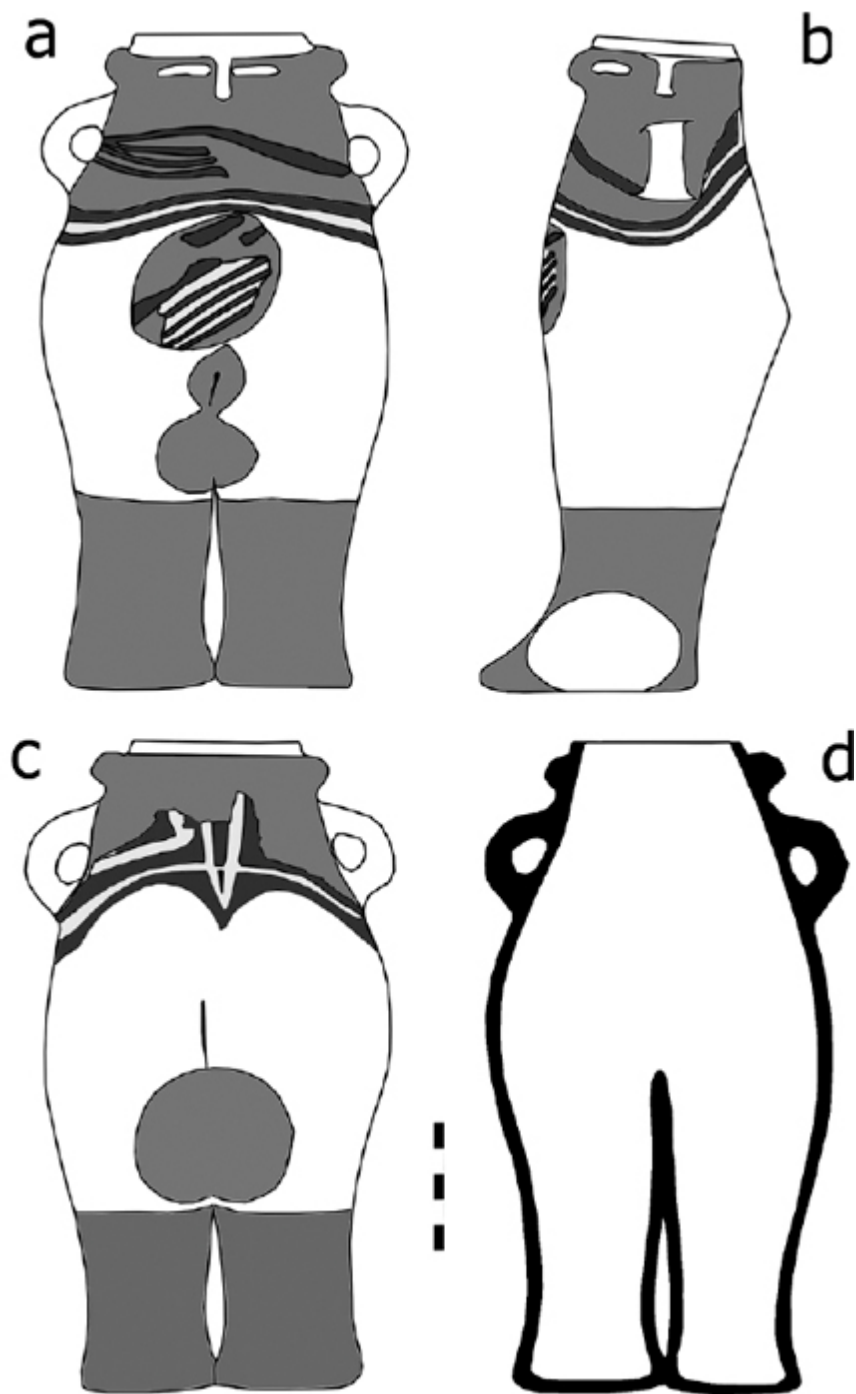


Figure 11.5: Human-shaped vessel (ID 2): a–c. layout of the decoration; d. profile.

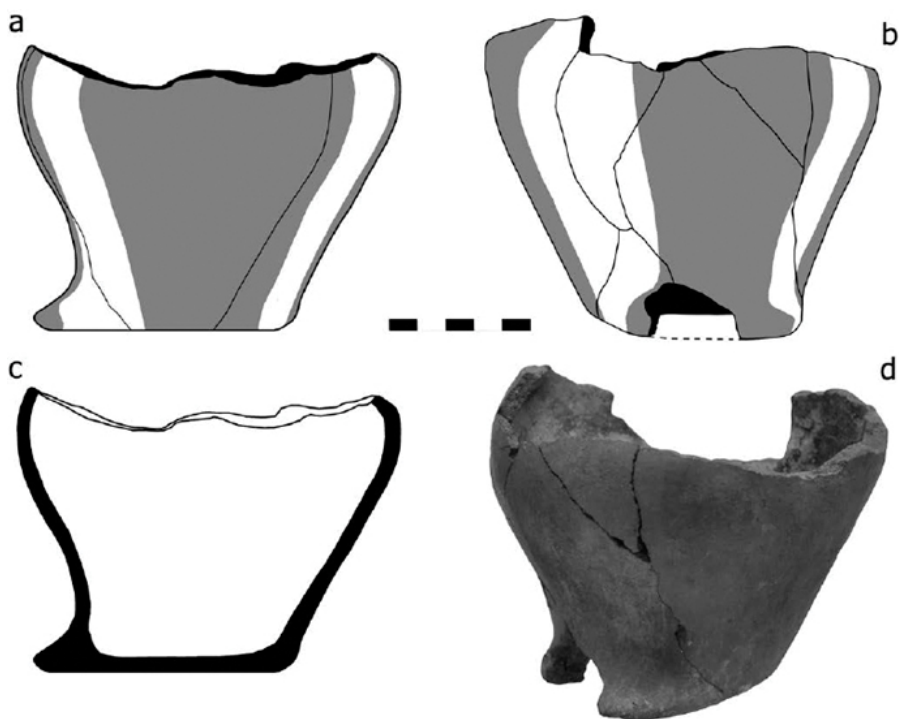


Figure 11.6: Half of a human-shaped vessel (ID 3): a–b. layout of the decoration; c. profile; d. photo of the outside.

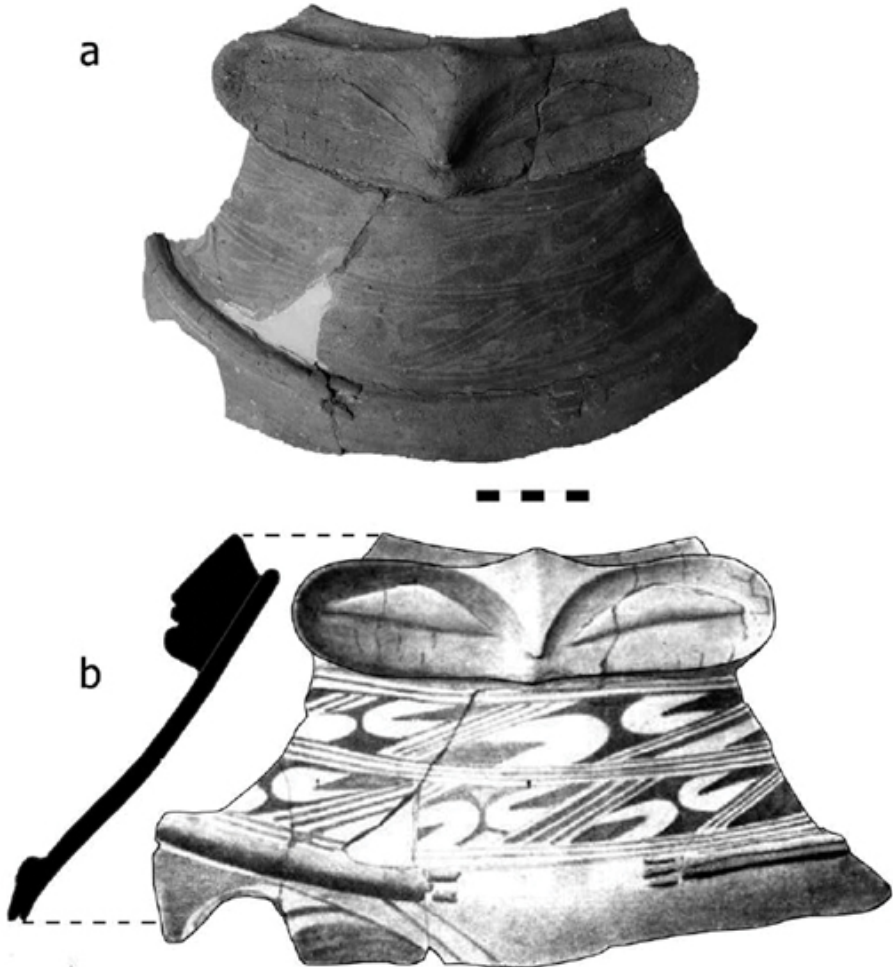


Figure 11.7: Vessel with human mask (ID 4): a. front (photo); b. profile and layout of the decoration (Adreescu 2002, modified).

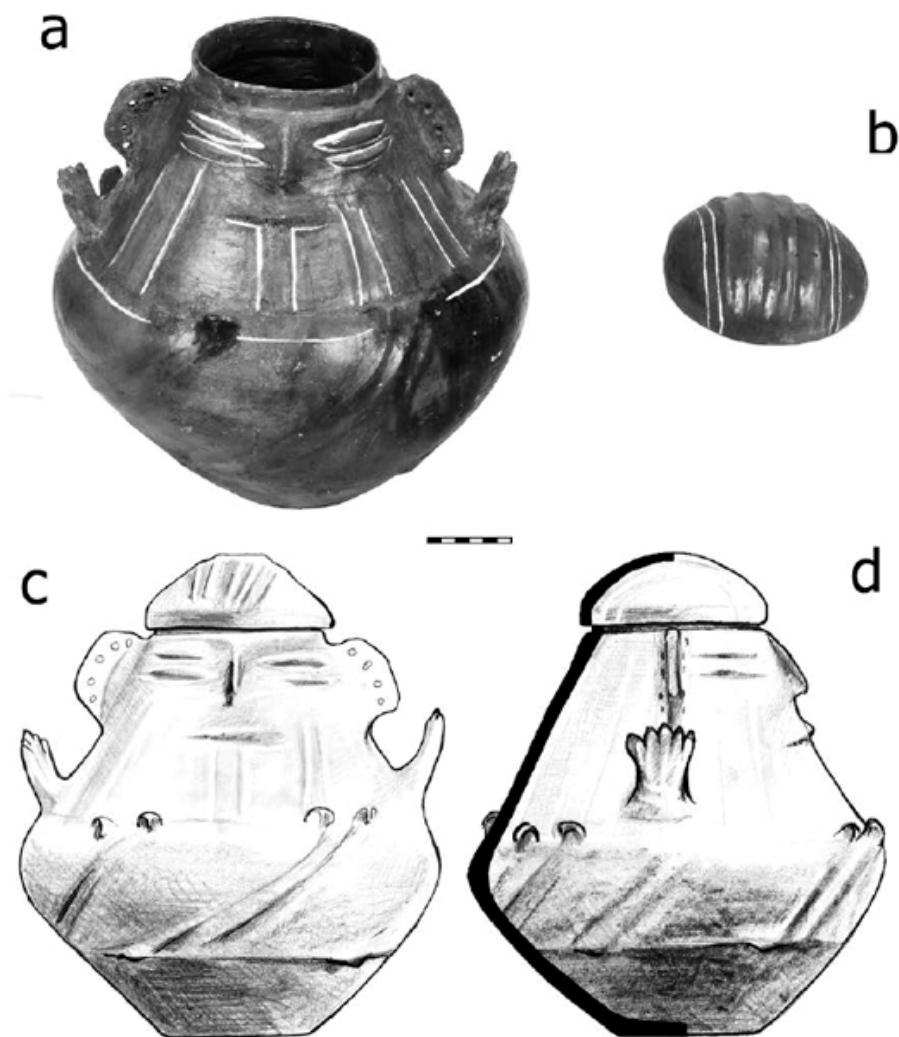


Figure 11.8: Bitruncated vessel (ID 5) and its lid (ID 6): a–b. photo of the outside; c–d. drawings of front and side (after Andreescu 2002).

The lid (ID 6) was produced as the upper part of a human head. The characteristics of the paste appear to be the same as those of the bitruncated vessel. Even the treatment of the surfaces is the same: roughly smoothed on the inner surface and the external surface polished. Four parallel channels bounded by white lines represent the hair.

ID 7 (Fig. 11.9). The paste was tempered with grog and rounded calcareous inclusions are visible. The absence of the cracks and the vessel's small dimensions suggest that the basic shape was formed from a single piece of clay. The inner surface was roughly smoothed. On the outside, it was polished. Both embossing and incision were used to form the anatomical elements of a human face, including the

hairstyle. A white calcareous crust that is placed inside the incisions is the result of post-depositional transformations in the soil. This representation of a human head is very realistic. Holes were made through the ears, and eight irregular punctures were made under the mouth. Even the nostrils were outlined by two small punctures. The eyes seem to be open.

ID 8 (Fig. 11.10). The external surface is damaged on one side, so the grog grains and the calcareous inclusions from the vessel paste are well visible. Its two fragments are joined at the maximum diameter (Fig. 11.10.a), revealing the building technique used by the potter. The firing took place in an oxidising, uncontrolled atmosphere as gray spots are present on some parts. As other similar discoveries (Andreescu 2002: 81) would suggest, there most likely would have been a human head in the upper part (Fig. 11.10.c). There are no elements that could suggest a gender differentiation.

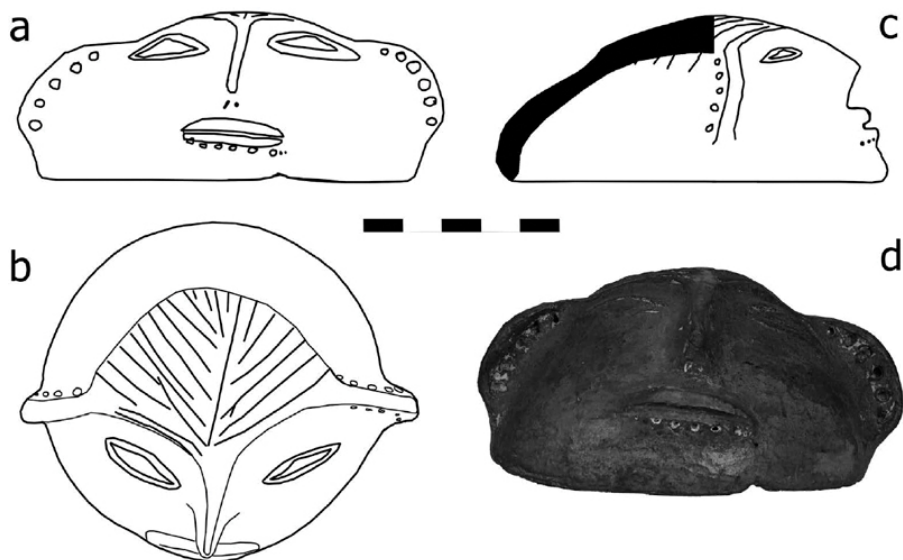


Figure 11.9: Anthropomorphic lid (ID 7): a–c. drawings of front, top and side; d. photo of the front.

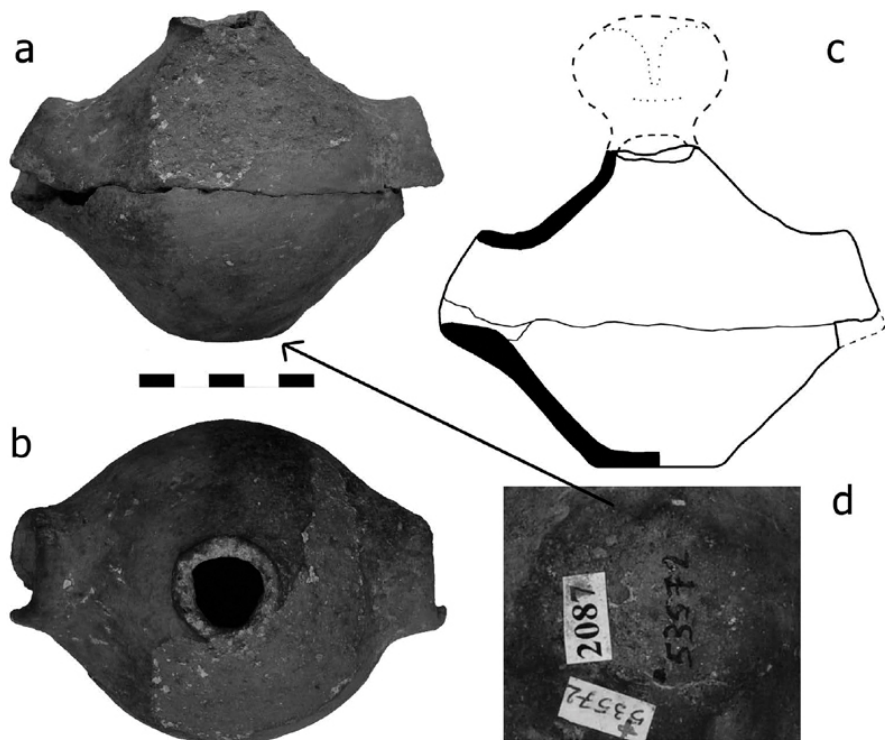


Figure 11.10: Vessel with tube hands (ID 8): a. photo of the front; b. photo from the top; c. drawing of a possible reconstruction; d. abraded parts on the base.

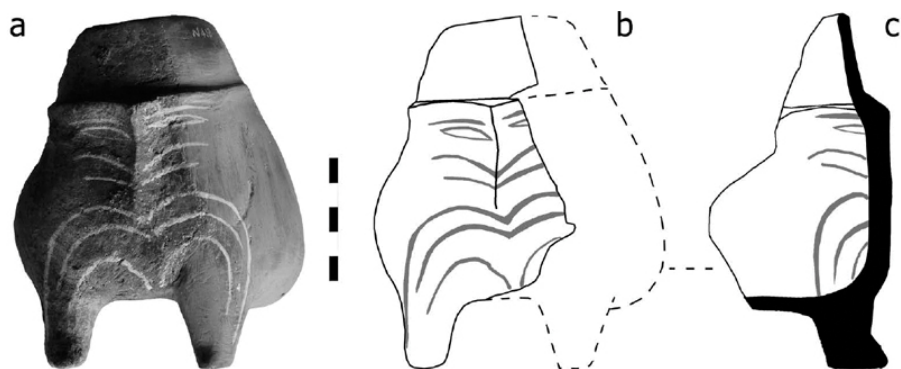


Figure 11.11: Anthrozoomorphic vessel (ID 9): a. photo of the front; b. drawing of the front; c. drawing of the side with profile.

Each hand has a rounded rim with a small diameter (Tab. 11.3). The body has a capacity of only 0.2 litres. The intensive use of this vessel is confirmed by deep abrasion patches that can be observed at its base (Fig. 11.10.c).

ID 9 (Fig. 11.11). Grog and calcareous inclusions are visible in its paste, having the same characteristics observed in all the vessels analysed here. Both surfaces were roughly smoothed. Because the

painted lines are very well preserved (Fig. 11.11.a), most likely the decoration with white dye took place before the initial firing.

Anthropomorphic parts are the painted eyes with their eyebrows and the embossed nose. Others elements, such as the body, the short legs and the painted lines, seem to describe a four-legged animal.

Functions and use

Certainly, the humanised pottery from Sultana-Malu Roşu had practical and symbolic functions, inherently determined by how they were used and the actions they were used for. Of course, they are complemented by technical attributes assigned by the potters when they were manufactured, but also by the people who used them.

As mentioned above we will not include the vessels referred to as ID 3 and 4 in this analysis because they are fragmentary, nor the anthropo-zoomorphic vessel (ID 9) because due to its fragmentation we cannot properly assess the necessary elements such as its shape.

From a practical point of view, in case of the human-shaped vessels (only ID 1 and 2) and of those with anthropomorphic attributes (only ID 5 and 8), one of the key elements is the storage capacity of these recipients. Thus, these pots have a capacity between 0.2 litres and 8 litres (Tab. 11.3).

The vessel with tubular hands (ID 8) has the smallest storage capacity (0.2 litres), but because of its specific shape (globular, without rim), it cannot be considered a container in its true sense. Probably it could have been used for the private consumption of liquids. The human-shaped vessels (ID 1 and 2) have a medium, relatively similar storage capacity (Tab. 11.3). In contrast, the bitruncated vessel with anthropomorphic attributes has a storage capacity over the average (8 litres), allowing us to consider it suitable as a container. The capacity of these vessels and the morphometric analysis shows that they can be used very well as containers, especially for liquids or “flowing solids” (like cereal grains).

On the other hand, according to our use-attribution analysis (Schiffer, Skibo 1989; Skibo 2013: 120–24), some of these pots were repeatedly used. Thus, in case of the human shape vessels (ID 1 and 2), on some parts of the body of both pots we found patches created by abrasion. Though the vessels are stable in a vertical position, little traces of abrasion were found on the bases (soles), but mainly on the back of the heels (Fig. 11.3.c–d) and on the buttocks (Fig. 11.3.a–b). The patches are clear signs that at various points the vessels were used on their back position. The lack of some specific marks on the soles could be evidence that while full the vessel was not moved. In case of the

human-shaped pot denoted as ID 3, weak abrasion traces were observed on the base. Also, a white crust is present only on the entire inner surface, covering a second crust of a grayish-black color. The grayish-black crust can be the result of dry cooking, such as the roasting of seeds that can form a carbonisation layer (Skibo 2013: 98).

The lids (ID 6 and 7) have a clear functionality, namely to cover (seal) pots and their contents. In case of the first lid (ID 5) there is no doubt about its association with a pot (because the pieces ID 4 and 5 were found together in the same context), whereas for the second lid (ID 6) no clear association with a ceramic container can be stated. In the case of the human shape vessels (ID 1 and 2), they also had some associated lids (pairs), as demonstrated by the way the neck was constructed, but also by the attrition traces identified on the rims. Unfortunately, they have not been identified.

Anatomical features

None of the pieces from the Sultana-Malu Roşu tell settlement classified as humanised pottery can be considered a realistic, or a complete representation of the human body.

The vessels with a human shape and with some anthropomorphic attributes contain only some identifiable anatomical elements (Tab. 11.4). Thus, in case of the human-shaped pots the general shape of the body is humanlike, persons are represented vertically, in standing position (ID 1, 2 and 3). In terms of anatomical elements represented, except the general shape of the human body (the first easily recognised visual element that draws our attention), particular attention is given to the legs (which is in fact the basis of these vessels) and to the head (which represents the top of the vessel, its mouth). Hands are in all cases represented in a stylised and abstracted form (Figs 11.2, 11.4, 11.5 and 11.6).

In the case of the vessels with anthropomorphic attributes (ID 4, 5 and 8), their bodies maintain the characteristics of common vessels (e.g. bitronconic or globular shapes), a particular attention being paid to the representation of the head and its facial features. A special case is the vessel with a human mask (ID 4), which has no proper facial representation. Instead, the mask has the similar facial physiognomic elements (e.g. the eyes and the nose) as human faces depicted on other vessels (e.g. ID 1, 2 and 5). Most interesting is the representation of the hands, as in the case of vessels of human shape, being represented in a stylised and abstracted form (Figs 11.7, 11.8 and 11.10). The legs are not represented on any of the analysed specimens.

Table 11.4: The anatomical elements represented on the humanised vessels from Sultana-Malu Roşu

ID	Legs	Hands	Body			Head					
			Breasts	Buttocks	Genital organs	Hair	Nose	Mouth	Eyes	Eyebrows	Ears
1	●	●		●	●		●	●	●		●
2	●	●		●	●		●		●	●	●
3	●										
4		●									
5		●					●	●	●	●	●
6						●					
7						●	●	●	●	●	●
8		●									
9	●						●		●	●	

The lids (ID 6 and 7) depict only some facial anatomical elements. The lid associated with vessel ID 5 only shows the person's hair while the other cover shows a detail rendered human face (eyes, ears, mouth, nose and hair).

In the case of the anthropo-zoomorphic vessel (ID 9), it has two zoomorphic legs and some anthropomorphic facial features (eyes, eyebrows, nose).

Regarding the facial attributes of the vessels from Sultana-Malu Roşu, which display sufficient elements (ID 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9), we can gain some important data. Thus, the facial physiognomy has received particular attention from the potters of this community, highlighting the most relevant anatomical features (eyes, nose, mouth, eyebrows, ears), placed anatomically correctly.

The manner of the representation of these anatomic elements is unitary as far as style and form are concerned. However, there are some variations in these representations. The ears of most of the analysed specimens (ID 1, 5 and 7) were represented following the specific artistic canons of the Gumelniţa communities: large (probably exaggerated), perforated, placed anatomically correctly, whereas in case of the human-shaped pot referred to as ID 2, the ears are represented in a shortened form (Fig. 11.5.a, c–d), unperforated, in an unusual manner for these prehistoric communities. The nose is represented in a normal form, in a stylised manner due to the manufacturing process of the vessels (ID 1, 2, 4 and 9). Only in a single case (ID 7), this facial element can be considered large, aquiline, probably a little exaggerated, but without exceeding the artistic canons of the Gumelniţa communities. The eyebrows are represented in four of the studied specimens (ID 2, 5, 7 and 9), their reproduction being rather similar. However, for the vessel with anthropomorphic attributes designated as ID 5, the eyebrows are made just like the eyes (shape and size), which can raise the question of the existence of two pairs of eyes. The mouth is rendered only on

some of the analysed pots (ID 1, 5 and 7), being realised in a stylised form as a line (incised or painted), without other anatomical details (e.g. lips).

Gender and age elements

Alongside with the anatomical elements represented on the humanised pottery from Sultana-Malu Roşu, some vessels show elements of gender differentiation (Tab. 5). However, it should be noted that most of the analysed vessels did not contain elements of gender identification (Tab. 11.5), and in two cases (ID 3 and 4), because we are dealing with fragmented pottery, this gender determination was not possible.

In case of the “Goddess of Sultana” (ID 1), it was published and discussed solely as a feminine representation (Marinescu-Bîlcu and Ionescu 1967: 30–33; Niţu 1969: 23–24; Andreescu 2002: 77–78; Voinea 2005b); alternative interpretations were not considered. Besides the large hips and the painted “sexual triangle”, there is no clear evidence that this vessel represents a feminine figure. Above the “sexual triangle”, there are three painted elements that could represent the male’s genitalia as well. This observation leads to two possible hypotheses. The first one implies the existence of a hermaphrodite representation, these kinds of representations being well known in Neolithic and Eneolithic of Southeast Europe (Bailey 2013: 246). Alternatively, this vessel could exhibit a secondary gender, a situation also attested in the Neolithic period (Hofmann and Whittle 2008).

For the human-shaped vessel labelled ID 2 (Tab. 11.1), the feminine sex of this representation is marked by a vertical incision, a vulva, with a painted circle around it, both placed in the pubic area. A similar incision was made in the back, between the buttocks.

The most interesting fact is that in the settlement from Sultana-Malu Roşu no male pots exist. Moreover, as has been shown by other authors (Tringham 1971; Radunčeva 1976; Dumitrescu *et al.* 1983; Todorova 1986; Bailey 1994; 2000; 2015; Andreescu 2002; Hansen 2007; Voinea 2009), in the Balkan Neolithic and Eneolithic, there is a significantly lower number of male representations compared to female ones, not only in the case of anthropomorphic vessels, but also of anthropomorphic figurines.

On the other hand, taking into account the fact that, within the examined group of humanised pottery from Sultana-Malu Roşu, only a small part shows clear elements of gender differentiation, the representation of the human body or only some anatomical features

may have been more important than the sexual dimorphism.

Table 11.5: The gender attributes represented on the humanised vessels from Sultana-Malu Roşu

ID	Female	Male	Hermaphrodite	No gender attributes	Indeterminable
1			●		
2	●				
3					●
4					●
5				●	
6				●	
7				●	
8				●	
9				●	

Regarding the age of the characters represented on the humanised pottery, only for the specimens that show enough evidence of identification, it can be said that they represent adults.

Other features

Some anthropomorphic pieces from Sultana-Malu Roşu present elements of hairstyles or clothing of the characters represented (ID 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

Thus, the capillary hair is only present on the two lids (ID 6 and 7). In both cases, the hair is apparently arranged, indicating the existence of a hairstyle.

Regarding the clothing of the persons represented in the case of the human-shaped vessels (ID 1 and 2), the main indicator for this element are the decorative patterns painted on their surfaces. The organisation of the linear or curvilinear motifs (Figs 11.2, 11.5) seems to indicate the existence of strips of canvas that are wrapped around the body. Obviously, the shape of their arrangement probably reflects both some clothing items but also some artistic improvisation (with decorative purposes only). On the other hand, the body decoration of these vessels could represent tattoos as it has been suggested by other authors (Dumitrescu 1974; Bailey 2005: 162; Voinea 2009; Zidarov 2009: 327–29). This assumption may reflect some specific practices of these prehistoric communities related to body embellishment or some practices with a special character.

Perforations identified on the analysed vessels ID 1, 5 and 7, in the area of the ears or mouth, could also be linked to the body embellishment practices of the past people. These may be the signs of some form of body piercing (Figs 11.2, 11.8 and 11.9).

The probably most spectacular element of the group of humanised

pottery examined at Sultana-Malu Roșu is the human mask applied under the rim of a bitronconical vessel (ID 4). It represents an item associated with a pot that has at least one stylised anthropomorphic attribute (the hands). The mask has an oval shape with the eyes and nose represented on its surface (Fig. 11.7). The realisation of these features is similar to that of the anthropomorphic vessels or human figurines specific to the Gumelnița communities.

Gestures, attitudes and expressions

Some vessels from Sultana-Malu Roșu offer several particular elements related to attitudes or gestures of the characters immortalized in clay.

The facial expression identified on some vessels (ID 1, 2, 5, 7 and 9) provides us with the image of characters with a neutral attitude, which cannot be associated with a certain emotional mood (e.g. joy, sadness, pain, contemplation). Most of the characters apparently are represented with their eyes closed (ID 1, 2 and 5) and only two have open eyes (ID 7 and 9).

The human-shaped vessels (ID 1 and 2) represent persons in standing position with an apparently solemnly attitude. For the “Goddess of Sultana” (ID 1) some authors have discussed the hand brought to the mouth, the so called “thinker position” as a cultic attitude (Marinescu-Bîlcu 1967; Voinea 2005b; 2009), with a strong connection to present day gestures. But we think that we have to take a closer look at the people who inhabited the Eneolithic settlement from Sultana-Malu Roșu, buried in inhumation graves in a cemetery situated 150 metres to the west of the settlement (Lazăr *et al.* 2012; Lazăr 2014). The majority of the individuals from the cemetery were carefully placed in crouched positions with one hand brought to their heads, most often the left hand, and the other hand placed on the pelvic area. Thereby, there is a strong possibility that this position is specific to the dead, and, therefore, the “Goddess of Sultana” is in a “dead position” and not in a “thinker position”. To support this assertion also comes that the eyes are represented closed and its clear use on the back position.

The raised hands represented on some of the vessels in Sultana-Malu Roșu (ID 5 and 8), but also in other Gumelnița sites in the Balkans, has led some authors to discuss about the “orison position” (Voinea 2009).

Discussions and conclusions

Certainly the biggest challenge of studying the humanised pottery

from (but not only) Sultana-Malu Roșu consists in the identification of their meanings. In Romania, throughout time, the archaeologists have tried to interpret this kind of items (Dumitrescu *et al.* 1983; Andreescu 2002; Voinea 2005a; 2005b; 2009), but unfortunately, these approaches have not exceeded the theme “Mother-Goddess” postulated by M. Gimbutas (1982). We will not insist on the limits of this approach here because a constructive criticism of those theories was done by several authors (Meskell 1995; Bailey 1994; 2005; 2013; 2015).

Anyone knows that the most abundant artifact category from the Balkan Eneolithic settlements is pottery. It is the same situation in the case of the Sultana-Malu Rosu settlement. However, here, as on other sites of the Gumelnița communities, together with common vessels, appears a significant number of humanised pottery, which is mostly found in association with some buildings. This fact proves an evocative relationship between houses, their inhabitants, and the anthropomorphic vessels. It is difficult to determine how these vessels were used by those people (whether in daily life or for special events), but the potential symbolism of this relation is rich and, indirectly, proves how humans are metaphorically likened to containers. With an outstanding skill, the potters from Sultana-Malu Roșu were able to incorporate the essence of the human body in clay through vessels. Furthermore, this situation suggests that the past communities not only paid attention to the technology of making pots, but also to their usage as well as to the manner people perceived ceramic vessels, potters and the processes of potting itself (Bailey 2000: 77).

On the other hand, all this humanised pottery tells us a story about those who manufactured vessels, those who have served as inspiration for the containers, and those who used them. Therefore, they provide a complex and particular biography about all these people and their objects reflecting their own identity.

Finally, the humanised pottery has the potential to translate the human body (with all its social, political and symbolic meanings) as an *object*, but also as a *subject* of representation, visualisation, manipulation, and negotiations within the society (Bailey 2005: 65).

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Chapter 12

Faces from the past: Face urns of the Pomeranian Culture and an idea of humans in the early Iron Age

Katarzyna Ślusarska

The problem

The transition period from the Bronze to the early Iron Age between the rivers Oder and Vistula brought fundamental changes in the funeral rites. Though cremation still remained the main way of disposal of the dead, the shape of the burial container and the grave architecture changed, especially in the northern part of this region. Plain amphorae and pots covered by bowls or plates were replaced by pear-shaped vessels with a long neck and hat-like lids. Barrows disappeared giving place to collective cist graves. The changes in the settlement pattern are more discrete, but scattered and small hamlets gradually replaced the large settlements of the Bronze Age. In archaeological nomenclature, the new set of funeral rites got the name Pomeranian Culture (or Pomeranian Face Urn Culture) and the type of funeral vessel – face urn – became a major determinant of it.

Let us discuss what a “face urn” is. According to Bronholm’s classical definition, a face urn is the vessel that “portrays” the human face, parts of it, or other parts of the human body (Bronholm 1933: 202). Leaving aside the discussion about what “portraying” people from the past means or whether people in the Bronze and early Iron Ages had or had not an ability to create such art, the face-urn is a highly anthropomorphic form and it is recognisable not only for those who directly share the common traditions of its producer but also for others, even several centuries later. The human ability to recognise the human face and silhouette in sets of shapes is both a biological (as survival and communication strategy) and a cultural feature (it covers

the commonly accepted visions of human beings, the beauty canon and so on). According to Kneisel's recent studies the presence of two of five distinctive elements of the human face (mouth, ears, eyes, nose and eyebrows) is enough to identify face representations on any man-made object (Kneisel 2012: 43). Although the highly anthropomorphic ceremonial vessels have appeared in many regions of prehistoric Europe, it is the early Iron Age that brought a real boom for the presence of face urns in funeral ceremonies (*cf.* Kneisel 2012: 23–34).

Most of the late Bronze and early Iron Age face urns come from the northern belt of the North European Plain. There are two main concentrations of these objects. The first one is in Jutland and the adjacent areas of the Elbe and Weser basins, where the anthropomorphic funeral pottery appears quite early. Kneisel points out that initial forms can be related to the late phase of the Bronze Age Period IV (c. 1000 BC) (Kneisel 2012: 487, tab. 28). The second concentration stretches from Pomerelia along the rivers Vistula and Noteć to the middle Oder and Warta basin ([Fig. 12.1](#)). Despite the fact that outside this region face urns are less frequent, they become one of the most important indicators of the early Iron Age cultural unit of the Pomeranian Culture dated to 7th to the 5th century BC (Ha D–Lt A).¹ The funeral tradition associated with this archaeological unit is not identical on its whole territory. Generally, there are two traditions that are closely linked by a genetic background. The first tradition covers regions of former western Lusatian groups, which corresponds to the northern and western areas of present-day Poland (Pomerelia, Kujawy and parts of Greater Poland). Here the dead were buried in collective cist graves containing pear-shaped urns, including also face urns. The second tradition is typical for the eastern region of the Pomeranian Culture (Masovia and Lesser Poland), previously occupied by eastern groups of the Lusatian Culture. For this tradition, the single graves with urns covered with big bell-shaped pots standing upside down are characteristic. Some scholars exclude this tradition from the Pomeranian Culture as a manifestation of a separate cultural unit – the Cloche Grave Culture. The face urns, as such, are extremely scarce on this territory. The relation between the cloche grave tradition and the classical Pomeranian Culture is still the subject of vivid discussion, but is irrelevant for the present study. The genesis of the Pomeranian Culture phenomenon, as well as its face urns, was widely discussed in central European archaeology, but up to this time it seems to be quite far from consensus (*cf.* La Baume 1963; Łuka 1966, 1971; Kruk 1969; Malinowski 1969; recently Kneisel 2012). Questions regarding genetics or chronology, as well as the role of face urns in the funeral

rite, are complicated also because of the simple lack of complete data, since many of the face urns come from 19th or early 20th century excavations or are stray finds. Some of these items are known only from archival sketches with no information on grave form, number of urns in it (number of face urns among them), and anthropological analysis.

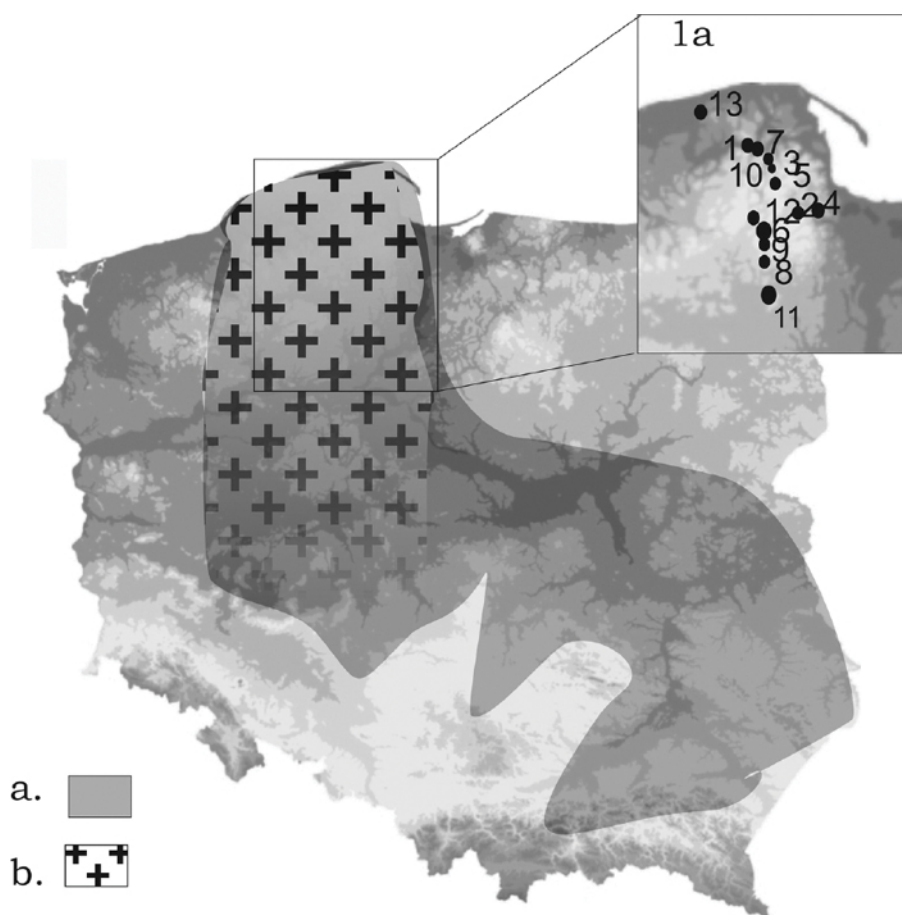


Figure 12.1: Pomeranian Culture. a. Pomeranian Culture with cloche-grave province, b. Cist-grave and face urn province. 1a. Test area. List of sites in Appendix.

In the late 1990s over 5,000 urns (urn and lid or separate parts of the set) were collected in two catalogues covering Pomerania (Kwapiński 1999) and other parts of Poland (Kwapiński 2007). Since then the number of known funeral sets has almost doubled. Even a cursory glance at cinerary urns collected in *Korpus kanop pomorskich* shows that there was no universal pattern in shape, decoration or the depicted elements (Kwapiński 1999; Kwapiński 2007). What is more important for the present study is that not every urn of this time

displayed a representation of the human face or a part of it. Therefore, in this paper the term “Pomeranian urn” will be applied, which refers to all the cinerary urns of the early Iron Age from the Vistula and Oder river basins unless stated otherwise.

The main aim of this paper is to discuss the role of highly anthropomorphic pottery in funeral rites of the early Iron Age societies between Rivers Oder and Vistula.

Analysis

The funeral sets of this time represent various numbers of “anthropomorphic” elements. Some bear full and detailed representations of the face accompanied by elements of costume and requisites for the social role; on others, the face representation is very sketchy or reduced only to one element – a pair of ears or eyes. Some sets have nothing but hat-like lids. There are also quite numerous groups of plain forms. There were some attempts to tie the way of the face representation to the time scale (Kruk 1969: 95–135). The scheme suggested by Kruk applies only to a limited group with a representation of the face or costume elements, especially dress fasteners (pins and fibulas). Other forms were neglected, determined as not being chronologically “sensitive”. Taking into account that even in one single grave the Pomeranian urn can represent all forms mentioned above, the decision for a particular form is taken based on more complex reasons than purely “fashion of the time”. Different levels of the urn complexity can be related to the need of choosing a more or less “meaningful” form that represents the dead person’s role in the local group (or the dead person’s family). Based on the level of anthropomorphism four categories can be distinguished:

I. Face urns (Fig. 12.2.1) represent the highest level of anthropomorphism. They can be characterised by complete and sometimes quite “realistic” representations of human faces including ears, eyes with or without eyebrows, nose and mouth. The face elements are accompanied by representations of jewellery (earrings, collars, pin/parallel pins or fibula), weaponry or figurative scenes. But representations of the face not always need to be complete – sometimes there is only one element depicted – only ears or eyes. This type of vessel is covered with a hat-like lid. The first group corresponds with Kneisel’s face representations and pseudo-face representations (Kneisel 2012: 43).

Vessels with simple eye holes on the upper part of the body or

on the lid can also be included in this category. They date to quite early times and are related to the so-called Grossendorf/Wielka Wieś phase – the transitional horizon between Lusatian and classic Pomeranian features of the material culture – dated back to the 8th and 7th century BC (late Ha C) (*cf.* recently Fudziński *et al.* 2007).

II. Face-type urns (Fig. 12.2.2) bear no elements of the human face. What makes them “anthropomorphic”, besides the presence of hat-like lids, is the representation of adornments, weapons or narrative scenes analogous to those depicted on face urns. The weapon or narrative scenes are engraved, but adornment can either be engraved or, in rare cases, applied on the pot. This does not concern earrings stuck in ears, and the presence of ears corresponds to the definition of the first category.

III. Hat-type urns (Fig. 12.2.3) represent a lower state of anthropomorphism. There are neither face elements nor representations of jewellery and weapons or figurative scenes on them. The urns included into this group sometimes resemble plain, everyday use pottery. What makes them different from it is the presence of specially made hat-like lids.

IV. Regular pottery (Fig. 12.2.4) – plain, everyday-use forms were also used as urns. They were usually covered with plain bowls or disc-shaped plates. Though both the pot and the lid had a plain form, they were still specially made pottery, with no traces of earlier use or with ornaments unusual for everyday pottery.

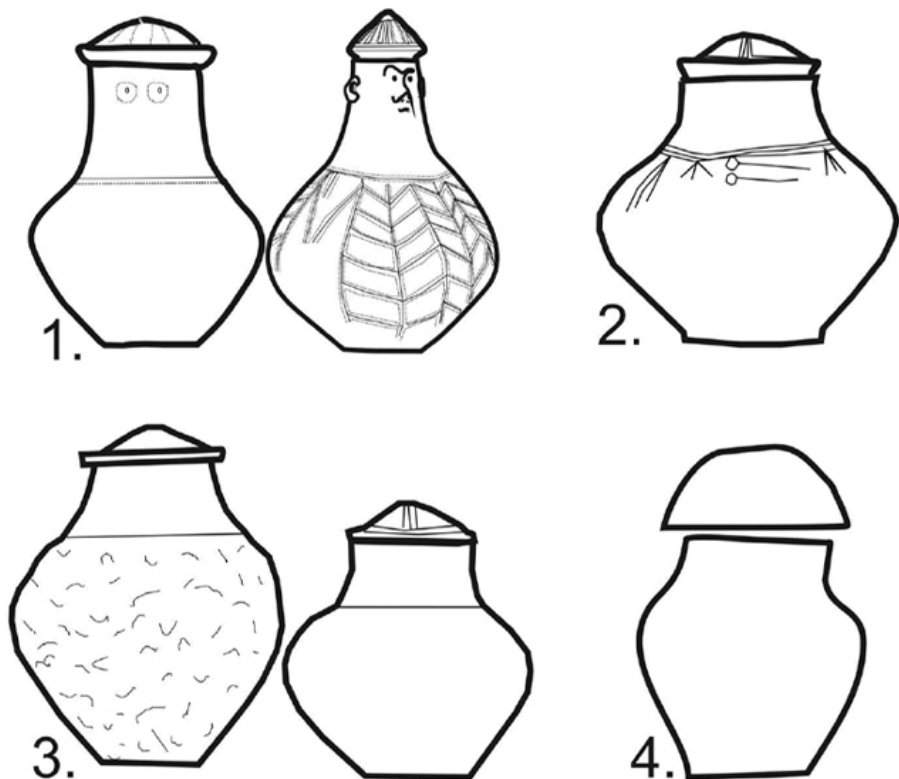


Figure 12.2: Urn types: 1. Face urn; 2. Face-type urn; 3. Hat-type urn; 4. Regular form.

This scheme was tested on 16 Pomeranian Culture cemeteries (list of sites in Appendix and [Fig. 12.1.a](#)). The main criteria were: systematic excavation, full publication (with full metric data and graphic documentation), full anthropological analyses. The main aim was to check the relation of urn type to its size, its position in the grave and the number of deceased buried in one vessel, including their age and gender.

Urn type and general urn number per grave

Most of the 106 graves analysed were collective burials. This corresponds to the general trend observed in the funeral rites of this time in the northern and western parts of Poland. Only 18 of them contained just one single urn and at the same time these graves had the smallest cists. Over 50% of all analysed graves contained up to five urns. However, collective graves with six and more urns are less frequent ([Fig. 12.3](#)). There is archival information on a cist grave containing the huge amount of 200 urns (Olszówka, Site 1; cf. Ossowski 1879: 27). This information seems slightly unreliable, taking into account that in case of the analysed group the largest number of

urns in one grave was 11 (Świecie-Marianki). There are graves with more than 15 urns, but they are not frequent (see Malinowski 1969: tab. 2).

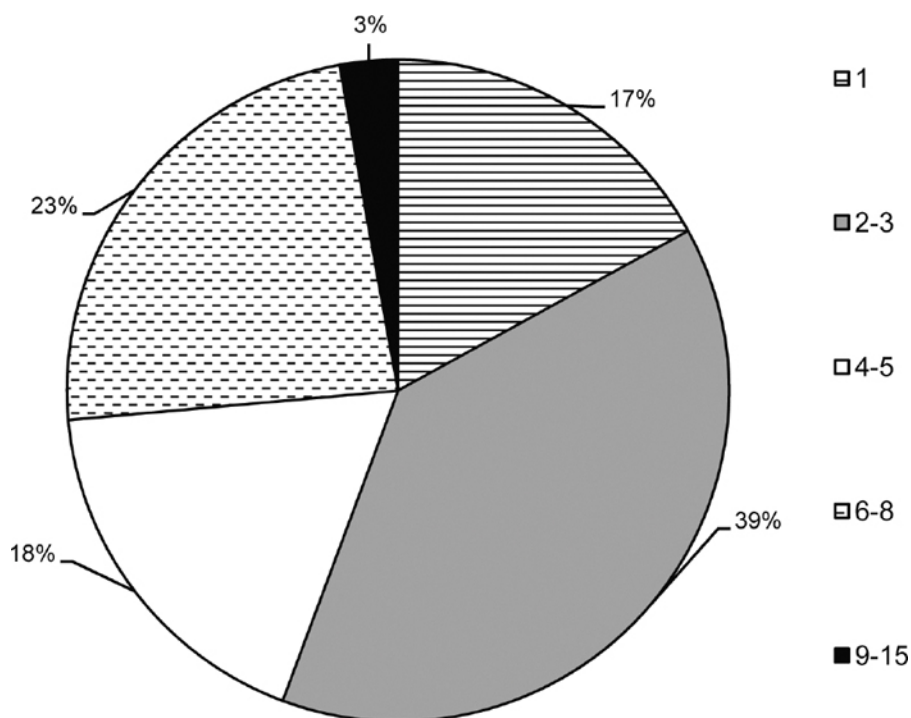


Figure 12.3: Urn number in the grave.

Usually graves contain more children and female individuals than males (Fig. 12.4). Male burials are usually single burials in the group of graves containing up to five urns. Only in one case there was more than one male individual buried in one cist (Luzino, 10a, grave 1). There are also graves containing only child burials. In the studied groups, there were only three single burials of children and all three were discovered on one site, Luzino 11. This site is dated to the earliest horizon of the Pomeranian culture (Wielka Wieś transitional phase – Ha C), but at this point it is difficult to say if this is a result of specific burial rules of that time or totally random.

Interestingly enough, the situation is completely different regarding graves with more than five urns. Male burials of this group are rarely single burials. Only three graves contained one single male burial – Starkowa Huta 2, grave 1, Rąty grave 43 and Rąb grave 14. On the contrary, most graves contained several male burials. That opens quite interesting perspectives for further social interpretations of cist graves. I will return to this issue further on.

Highly anthropomorphic urns (face urns and face-type urns) were found in 42 of all graves. In this group, 26 graves contained only one such form, whereas other urns in the same graves correspond with the hat-type urns or have a regular form. But there are also graves containing more than one face or face-type urn. This special form does not occupy any specific place in the grave. They can be placed near the northern wall, which corresponds to the earliest burials, or near the southern wall, such as in the latest ones (Fig. 12.5).

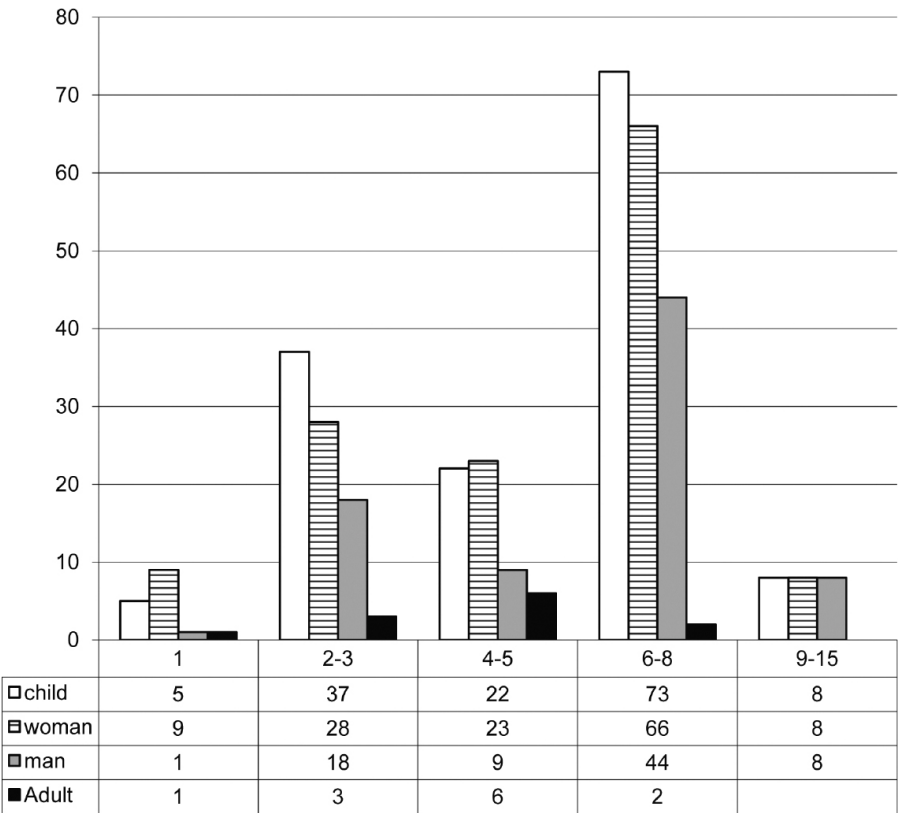


Figure 12.4: Age and sex distribution in the grave.

Urn type frequency and its correlation to number, sex and age of the deceased

Among 394 urns only 61 (16%) bear full or partial representations of the human face, whereas 137 (35%) have hat-like lids. The most numerous group, 189 (48%), consists of non-anthropomorphic sets of regular pots covered with a bowl or a plate. However, this means that more than half of the urns bear some traces of anthropomorphism (either by the representation of the face, jewellery or other objects or by the presence of hat-type lids) (Fig. 12.6).

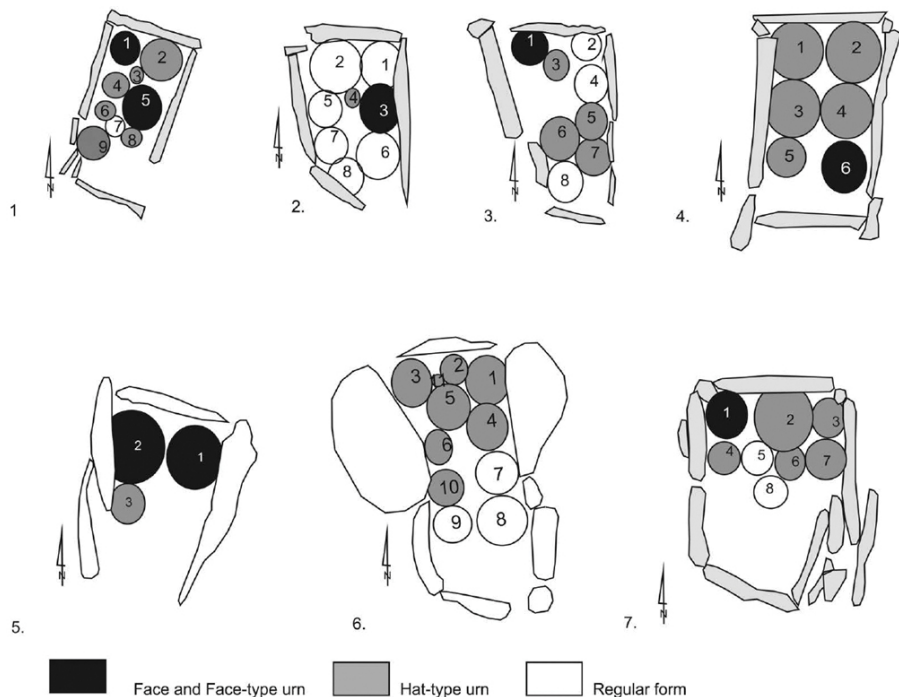


Figure 12.5: The urn type distribution within the grave. 1. Rąb, grave 14; 2. Rąb, grave 23; 3. Rąb, grave 19; 4. Rąb, grave 12; 5. Sychowo, grave 1; 6. Świecie-Marianki; 7. Stare Polaszki, grave 14.

Most of the urns studied contained remains of only one person. Only 68 of them (less than 25%) contained remains of more than one person, usually adults or an adult and a child (Fig. 12.7). Due to the low number of observations further correlations between the type of urn and age/sex of the individuals buried in collective urns cannot be analysed in this test group (Fig. 12.8).

That raises the question about the factors that determine the choice of more or less anthropomorphic containers. For further studies, only urns containing single burials were chosen. Face urns with full or partial face representations and face-type urns account for only 10% in the whole analysed group (30 of 246 objects). Both children and adults were buried in those types of urns. Almost half of all urns used for individual burial were regular pots covered with a regular bowl or plate. Children were buried in hat-type urns rather than in face or face-type urns, but the share of a regular form is lower than that in the group of adults. However, in the group of adults not only the regular forms are more frequent than in the group of children, but also face urns and face-type urns are more numerous (Fig. 12.9).

Due to the low number of observations the correlation between urn type and sex of the buried is not very reliable. Still, there is the possibility to formulate some preliminary remarks. The face urns are

more frequently associated with female burials and double burials (containing female and child remains) than with male burials. This observation can be supported also by the high frequency of “female” markers (such as earrings, Pomeranian multi-ring necklaces with openwork fastener and a pin) depicted on urns listed in both catalogues (Kwapiński 1999; Kwapiński 2007). Unfortunately, most of these elaborate forms not only lack anthropological analyses, but most of them also came from unknown context so it is almost impossible to formulate any remark about their role in the funeral rite.

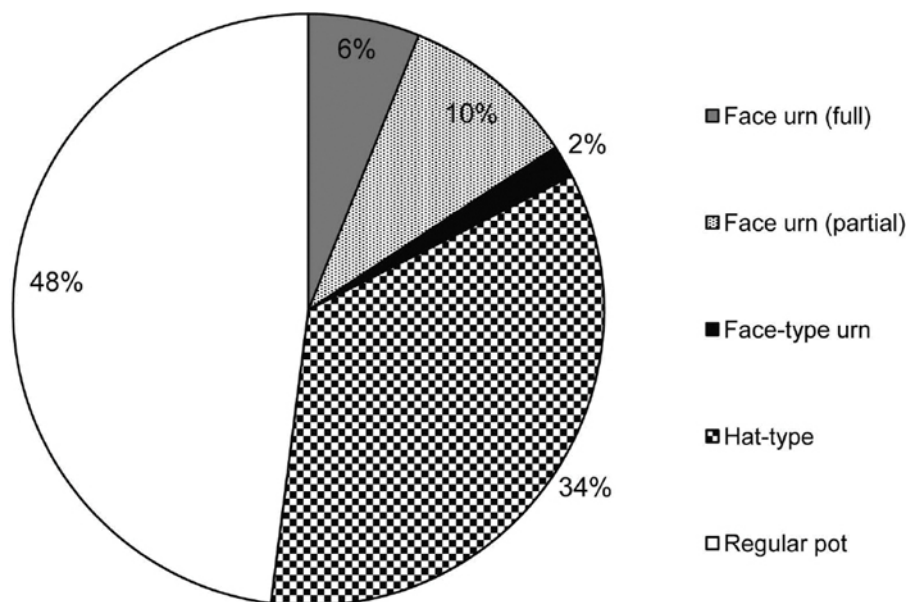


Figure 12.6: Frequency of urn types. Total number: 394.

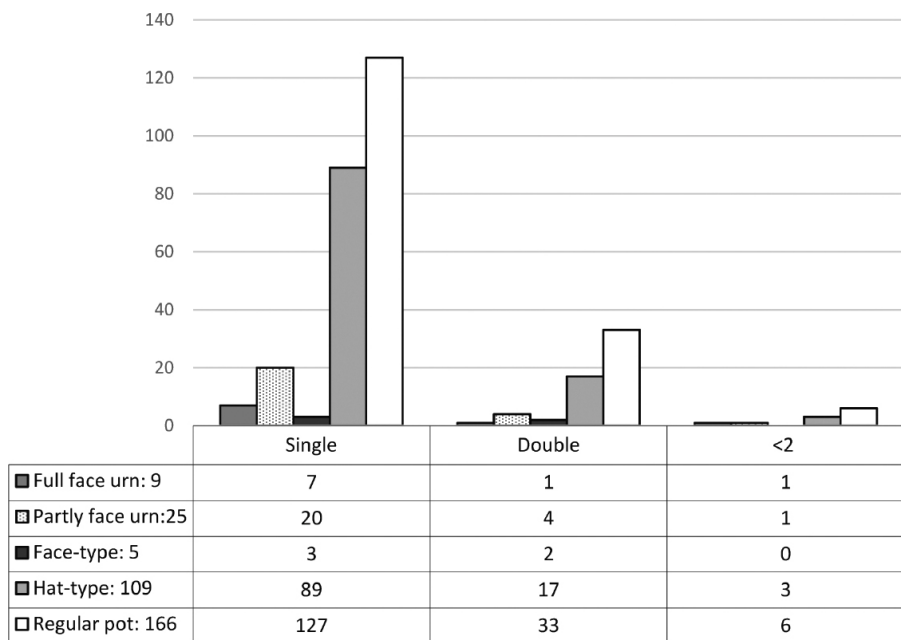


Figure 12.7: Correlation of the urn type and number of individuals buried in. Total number: 314.

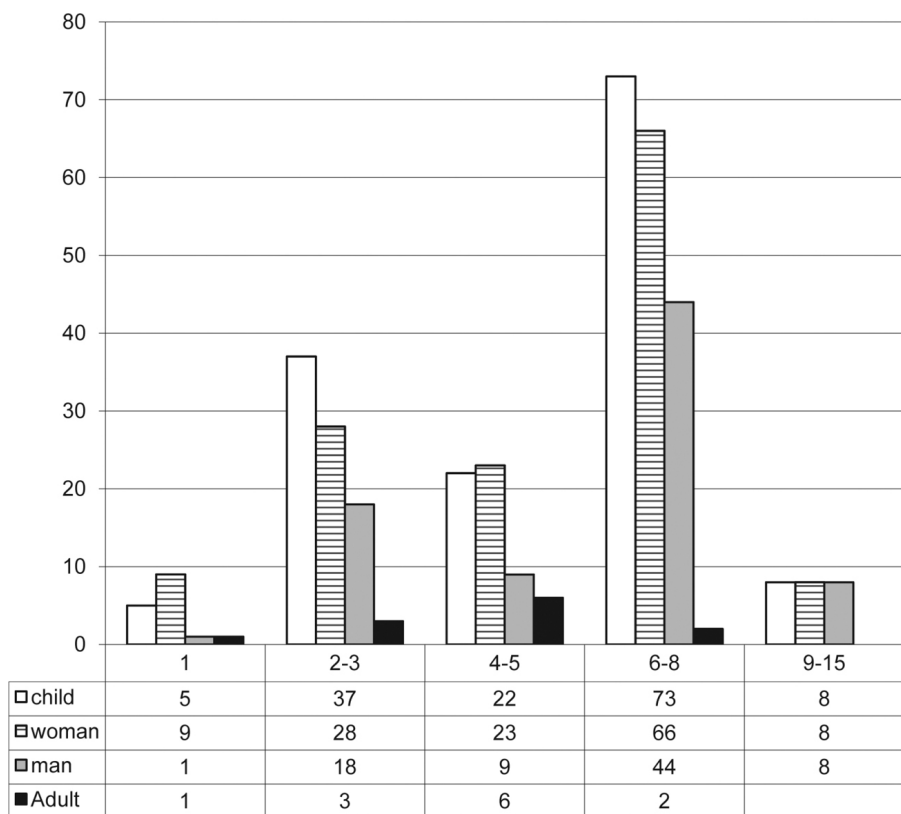


Figure 12.8: Correlation of the urn type and gender – single burial urn. Total number: 262.

Urn capacity and its correlation to urn type, the number of buried, their age and sex

Correlations between urn type and size were made only for a small group of 266 vessels. Almost half of all analysed vessels were in the range of 5 to 10 litres (126). This trend seems not to depend on the type of urn (Fig. 12.10). But the capacity seems to depend on the number and age of individuals buried in one container (Fig. 12.11). The smallest urns were prepared for the youngest children. In the group of 40 children buried in the smallest vessels (less than 2.5 litres) only six were identified as *Infans II* (aged 7–15). In this group, all burials were single burials (except for one double burial of newborns – Luzino, gm Wejherowo, stan. 16, grave 1). The biggest vessels usually contain remains of adults, both women and men, with no dominance of either. Further studies on a larger number of observations could change this view, but it is noteworthy that in all analysed groups female remains were more frequently identified than male remains. Among 228 adult individuals in the analysed group, buried both in single and collective urns, 138 (60%) individuals were identified as female and 80 (35%) as male. Most women were identified as *Adultus* (aged 20–30) (94 individuals) or *Maturus* (aged 30–50) (37 individuals) whereas men represent all age groups with a slight predominance of the *Maturus* group. That corresponds well with the observation that the average age at death for women of the early Iron Age was 31, whereas for men it was 41 (Fudziński, Gładykowska-Rzeczycka 2000: tab. 1).

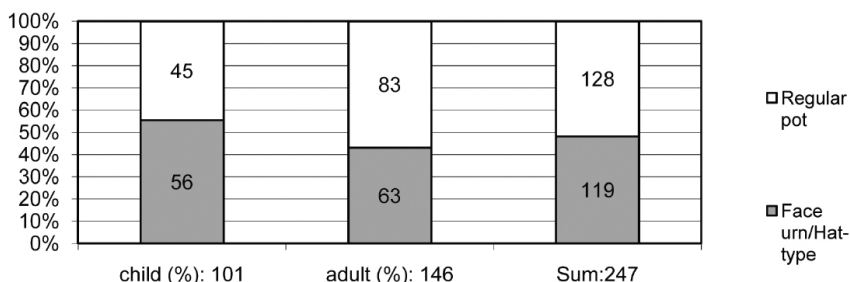
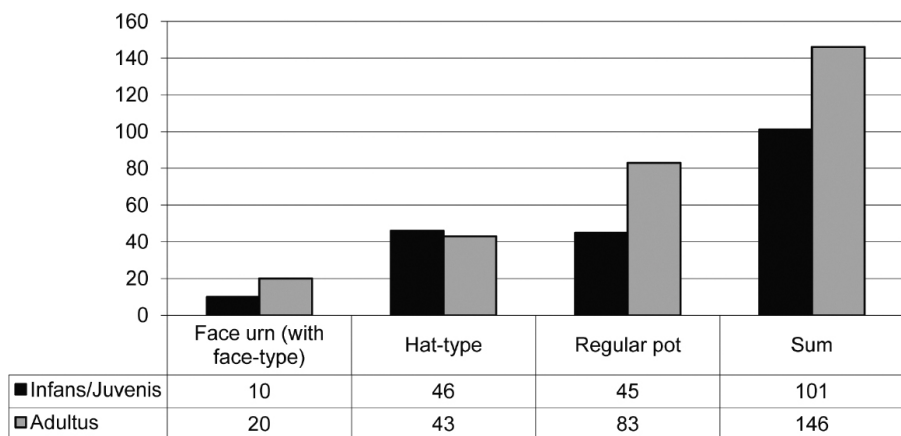


Figure 12.9: Correlation of the urn type and age. Total number: 247.

Discussion

The sizes of the cist suggest that these structures were built as a kind of family tombs. They are usually also appropriate for the number of urns placed inside, which can indicate that the constructors had, at least approximately, estimated how many people would eventually find their place in particular graves. In some constructions, there is quite a lot of free space left whereas others are “overcrowded”. There are also known examples of enlarged cists (Răb, grave 2) and graves containing one or two urns with no more space left. Highly anthropomorphic urns do not occupy any special place in the grave and therefore they hardly can be interpreted as a burial of kin/family head or its last living (or rather dying) representative.

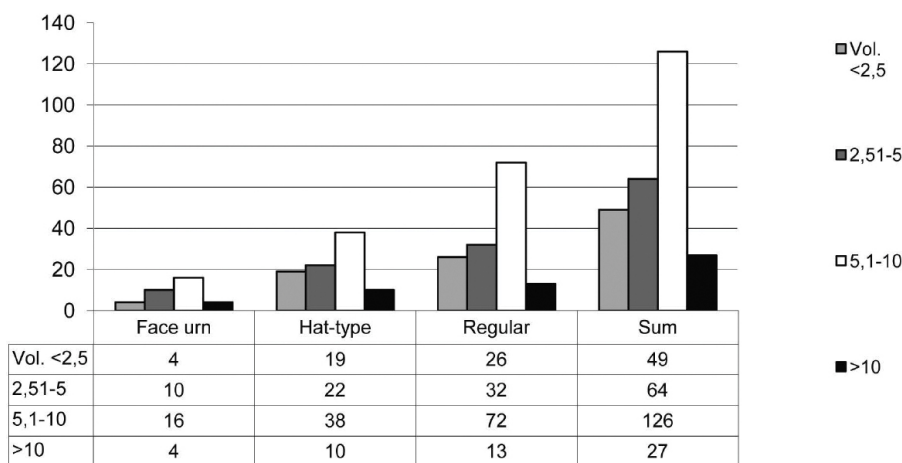


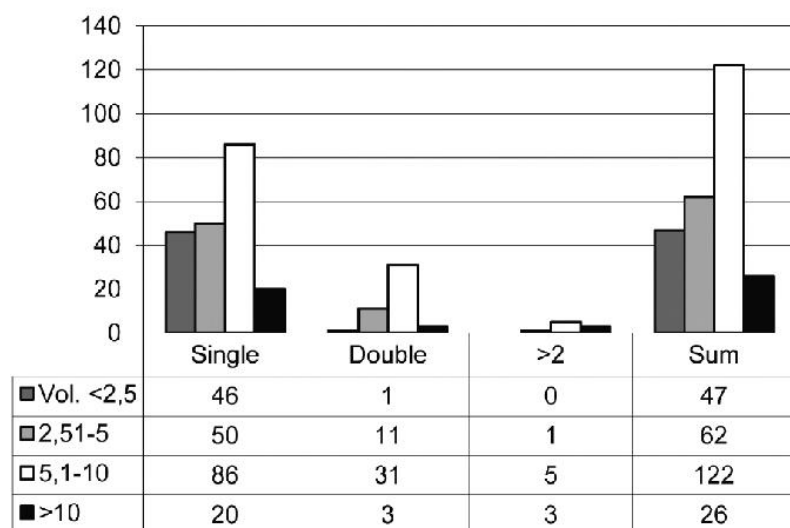
Figure 12.10: Correlation of the urn type and its capacity. Total number: 266.

The foregoing considerations allow to describe a standard Pomeranian urn. It seems to be a regular vessel or hat-type urn, containing remains of only one person. These two types of vessel represent a relatively low level of anthropomorphism in comparison to face urns as such. Nevertheless, I believe that even regular forms in the context of graves should be considered as an expression of anthropomorphism. The idea of collecting ashes in a clay container itself can be considered as a way of transforming a vessel into a kind of durable body. In the early Iron Age, Central Europe cremation, as a proper way of burial, already had a tradition of over 500 years. And so, the idea of collecting burnt bones in a clay container has been already well established. Ceramic containers were perceived as an appropriate form for human remains, but most of the time did not take over the shape of a human figure or face. Indeed, among Bronze Age Urnfield communities there is not a single example of an urn in the shape of any part of the human body, but neither are there many examples of anthropomorphic representations prior to Hallstatt times. A shoe-shape vessel appeared in the Bronze Age pottery assemblages of the Lusatian culture, but a shoe can hardly be perceived as a human body representation, and these objects did not serve as cinerary urns. It is noteworthy that these forms are quite late; they came from the time of the beginning of the Hallstatt culture influences.

Since Max Weber's "disenchantment of the world" started much later than the early Iron Age, it can be assumed that the vision of the world at that time was a syncretistic one, with no clear division between purely technical and purely symbolic acts. According to the syncretistic mind all actions are permeated with meaning. For contemporary humans, the winged horse – Pegasus – is an entirely

fictional creature, whereas for syncretistic minds both the horse and Pegasus belonged to the same reality. And so, the clay container, after the bones were collected and put inside, undergoes a specific kind of metamorphosis into a kind of eternal body. The idea of the human body and a clay/earth affinity had begun prior to the cremation tradition. Many Indo-European mythologies preserved the idea of a telluric origin of humans, who were modelled by gods of clay and various admixtures (see Prometheus' man). However, the idea is not exclusively Indo-European. The Egyptian god Khnum built babies on a potter's wheel and then placed them into the wombs of women. Likewise, Babylonian Aruru built Enkindu, Gilgamesh's companion. Similar mythical motives are present in both the Bible and the Quran tradition. This kind of affinity is well preserved also in many contemporary languages representing different language families (German, Slavic and Turkish). The parts of a vessel bear the names of human body parts, e.g. English *neck*, German *Hals*, Polish *szyjka*, Serbian *opam* and Turkish *boyun*.

Total number: 257



Total number: 193

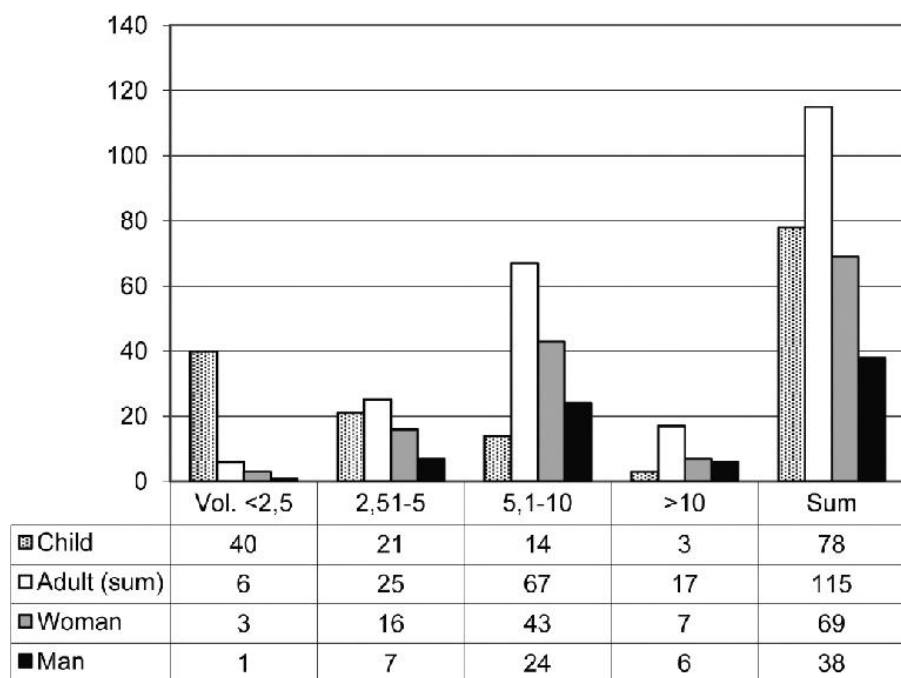


Figure 12.11: Correlation of the urn type and number a. and age/sex b. of individuals.

The acceptance of the vision mentioned above provokes the question as to why the levels of anthropomorphism are so differentiated. According to common, but usually *a priori* imposed

assumptions the more elaborate funeral rites, grave architecture or assemblage represent the more important role or higher status of the deceased. There are also questionnaires on grave elements that help to identify “rich” or “elite” graves (Shennan 1975: 279–88). Among other “foreign” goods, elaborate construction, unique materials and special places are enumerated as indicators of high status. But at this point Medieval and early Modern so called “vampire graves” should be mentioned. Usually these graves are placed in exceptional locations in or outside cemeteries, with the traces of special activities during the grave construction, with specially treated deceased buried in them (placed face down or crushed with stones, with head and extremities cut off and displaced, an iron or wooden stake rammed into the chest). Definitely, a lot of effort was paid to make them different to regular grave structures and body treatment. But this has nothing to do with a high status. On the contrary, these people were alienated from the society for many reasons and punished *post mortem*. All effort was paid to punish the dead and protect the society against his/her evil influence on the living. These people – physically deformed, convicted of all sorts of crimes from theft to black magic, suicides, people afflicted by a sudden, “wrong” death – had the lowest possible status in their own communities in the moment of death or prior to it. Therefore, there are many possible explanations for anomalies in funeral rites, both positive (e.g. high social status) and negative (e.g. social exclusion or deficient social competencies).

Therefore, the question remains, who deserved to be buried in highly anthropomorphic urns and was it really related to a higher status? As it was already mentioned most people buried in face or face-type urns were either female or juvenile. We do not know much about the social order of the Bronze and early Iron Age communities from the region in question, though grave assemblages and funeral rites can be helpful for considerations on social issues not only as social status markers, but also for understanding mating rules, marriage residence patterns and gender-specific mobility. For many parts of the “barbarian” part of Europe stable isotope analyses and genetic studies performed on some Bronze and Iron Age cemeteries yielded quite interesting results. Both men and women were mobile, though women were usually involved in micro-mesoscale movements within one region, whereas some groups of men were involved in large-scale movement as mercenaries, warriors, traders or itinerant craftsmen (see also Arnold 2005: 17–26). Gender-related mobility does not exclude women from long-distance resettlement, but this issue seems to be strongly related to the social complexity, subsistence

strategies and degree of sedentism. According to studies on the Egtvedt Girl (Frei *et al.* 2015), the Huldremose Woman (Frei *et al.* 2009), as well as the early Bronze Age female grave of Szczepankowice (Pokutta and Frei 2011: 70–91) at least some women were born far away from the place where they have lived and died. Studies on Upper Silesia-Lesser Poland cemeteries of the Lusatian culture led to the assumption that society using these burial grounds can be characterised by patrilineal kinship descent, patrilocal residence and preferential matrilineal marriages at least in some groups (model lineage?) (Rysiewska 1996). According to the results of analyses there were no clear rules that controlled the selection of urns for particular deceased. As early as in the late 19th century Ossowski suggested that female urns, that means urns containing female markers (single pins, collars, pierced ears with earrings), are more frequent (Ossowski 1879: 44). Indeed, more anthropomorphic elements seem to be related to anthropologically recognised female and child burials than to male burials. Although female markers on the urns seem to be more typical for women, it is not an absolute rule, since “female” urns can contain remains of either women only or of a woman with child or of a woman with a man. Nonetheless, the presence of females can be one of the important reasons for marking cinerary urns with gender-specific markers. Leaving aside the discussion on potential succession, marriage and postnuptial residence rules among early Iron Age societies it can be assumed that within every human group there is no complete equality between its members. People have differentiated positions in relation to each other based on gender, age, kin affiliation, local or foreign provenience, and many other, for archaeologists undetectable, factors. I believe that the opposition between locals and foreigners played an important role and that to pre-logical minds “humanity” of “others” may not have been obvious (in case of enemies even questioned) and needed to be specially emphasised. This way of thinking was expressed by ethnographically known endonyms, that frequently express the conviction of being “the real/the only” human. Within a group social and family rules are obvious to everybody and need not be expressed on urns, whereas “incomers” need to be specially marked as “woman” or “man” or by other attributes important to the group. That hypothesis can explain the higher frequency of females (as incomers through marriage exchange) or children (not fully shaped social beings) in highly anthropomorphic urns, but so far it remains a pure intellectual play, unless we gain more information from non-archaeological methods (at least e.g. stable isotope analyses).

Appendix

No.	Site	Site number	Number of graves	Number of urns	Number of face urns	Reference
1	Luzino	8	1	1	0	Wiącek 1972; Gładkowska-Rzeczycka 1972
	Luzino	10, 10a, 10b	4	9	3	Wiącek 1972; Gładkowska-Rzeczycka 1972
	Luzino	11	5	12	2	Wiącek 1972; Gładkowska-Rzeczycka 1972
	Luzino	16	2	7	0	Wiącek 1972; Gładkowska-Rzeczycka 1972
2	Glinicz Nowy	–	5	19	4	Skarbek 1968; Gładkowska-Rzeczycka 1968
3	Głazica	3	–	–	–	Fudziński 1998; Rożnowski 1998
4	Niestępowo	3	5	22	4	Szwed 1967
5	Rąb	–	20	79	8	Fudziński and Rożnowski 2002
6	Rąty	–	15	48	0	Fudziński and Gładkowska-Rzeczycka 2000
7	Sopieszyno	1	2	7	0	Fudziński 1995b
8	Stare Polaszki	1	11	41	2	Gedl and Szwed 1965; Gładkowska-Rzeczycka 1965
9	Starkowa Huta	2	3	17	2	Fudziński 1995a; Gładkowska-Rzeczycka 1995
10	Sychowo	3	2	5	2	Felczak 1985; Gładkowska-Rzeczycka 1985
11	Świecie-Marianki	–	1	11	0	Kochanowski 1985
12	Zawory	–	7	30	0	Fudziński and Rożnowski 1997
13	Zwartowo	–	13	41	19	Gedl 1968

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¹In the Pomeranian Culture urns for ashes were covered with a lid, forming a set, so the term “urn” will be further applied in sense of the set of a pot and a lid unless stated otherwise. Due to its location, many Pomeranian Culture cemeteries were discovered by chance during agricultural activities or small scale sand quarries, and then excavated in course of rescue excavations in the late 19th and early 20th century. Most of those cemeteries were excavated only partially during repeated actions, wherefore many of the urns are either incomplete, severely damaged or known only from archival sketches.